POETS, SANTS, AND WARRIORS:
THE DADU PANTH, RELIGIOUS CHANGE AND IDENTITY FORMATION IN JAIPUR STATE CIRCA 1562-1860 CE

by

James M. Hastings

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Acknowledgments

It was my goal in conducting this research to to try to understand the disparate glimpses I had of the lives of Dadupanthis today, to understand their history and to place their behaviors and their personalities within a specific historical context that would help me explain why they do what they do. It was a task greatly enabled by the cooperation and helpfulness of many individuals to whom I wish to express my gratitude. First of all, I must thank Sri Hariramji, the Mahant of the Naraina Dadu Dham, for providing assistance and accommodation. I also wish to particularly thank Gopaldas Swami and Brahm Prakash Swami of Naraina, who provided the assistance as well as friendship and good conversation. Mahant Ram Prasad, the Niwai Mahant and the last of the great Nagas, was generous to a fault in providing information, manuscripts and documents. His disciple, Dr. Dayaram Swami, was a gracious host. At Dadu Mahavidyalay, Swami Bajrangdas and Ghanshyamdas were also generous with their collection of manuscripts and documents. Dr. Krishnadas Dadupanthi, the Director of Dadu Dayalu Mahasabha, was equally generous with his time and resources, as were Ramsukhdas Swami and Mahant Kailashdas of Jaipur, Hanumandas Swami of Sanganer, Mahant Prakashdas of Rajgarh, Mahant Jairamdas of Ghatra, the prolific writer Swami Narayandas of Ajmer, Swami Purndas of Jasrapur, and countless other Dadupanthi sadhus and householders. "Satya Ram!"

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A Note on Translation and Transliteration

All translations are my own unless otherwise noted. Hindi terms have been translated as they sound, without the use of diacritical marks. In words that are common to both Sanskrit and Hindi, the final 'a' is dropped in conformance with Hindi pronunciation. The general exception to this rule is in proper names and words that are familiar in English usage, such as Vaishnava, Shaiva, dharma, karma, etc. The latter are, in general, not italicized.

Chapter One

The Bhakti Movement and the Formation of the Dadu Panth in Amber

In 1562 CE, Emperor Akbar, then just 19 or 20 years of age, met with Bharmal, the chieftain of a small territory in eastern Rajasthan known as Dhundar, Amer or Amber. Representing his clan, the Kacchwahas, Bharmal formed a subordinate alliance with Akbar and the Mughals, an alliance that would bring momentous changes to both parties. Coincidentally, hagiographical tradition has it that in the same year a boy of eighteen, Dadu, traveled from Gujarat to Rajasthan to begin a period of intense spiritual practice in the hills west of Sambhar Lake, the great salt lake that lay some fifty kilometers west of Amber, the Kacchwaha capital. At the time, no one knew what profound changes the alliance would bring to the principality of Amer and its people. They could have foreseen neither the fame Dadu would later achieve as a regional *sant* popularizing devotion to a formless deity, nor the symbiotic relationship that would develop between Amer and generations of Dadu's disciples.

This dissertation is a case study of the ideological changes undergone by one particular sectarian community within what has come to be called the bhakti movement. Established in a very loosely organized manner by devotees of the wandering *sant*, Dadu, the community gradually began to adopt ideas and practices that differentiated it off from other, competing sects. At the same time, to varying degrees it adhered to behaviors that were normative for a large number of the practitioners of "Hindu" religion. Thus, this study is concerned with issues of identity, both religious and caste identity, and with questions of

their construction and persistence. It is concerned as well with how the construction of religious identity is affected by the sociocultural milieu in which it develops, and with how regional conditions are tied in with the sociopolitical conditions of the greater society. In order to explore the historical development of identities and ideologies, I examine the significant factors that contributed to the various strands of its trajectory. It is a tangled and complicated web of relationships to unravel and explicate, even though several strands stand out clearly. It is further complicated by the indistinct boundaries that existed prior to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries surrounding concepts like "state," "religion," "caste," and "tradition."

Much of the early writing on what has been termed the "bhakti movement" has looked for its commonalities, and has tended to view north India as a culturally homogeneous region. Certainly, reading the words of reformist *sants* of the bhakti movement such as Kabir, Guru Nanak, or Dadu one might formulate the opinion that the sects founded by their followers would today be quite comparable, since there is such a remarkable similarity in the thought of the three. Yet, due to other factors, the three sects, the Sikh Panth, Kabir Panth and Dadu Panth, have developed in significantly different ways despite retaining a few overt correspondences in ideology. In the simplest terms, the three developed as they did due to the particular conditions within which each arose and was consolidated. In the case of the Sikhs, W. H. McLeod (1975, 1989) has discussed the effects of an influx of Jats and their ethos, and he and others have discussed the impact of violent Mughal opposition in the construction of Sikh ideology. Recently, Saurabh Dube (1998) has examined the historical conditions that affected the growth of the Satnampanth in Chhattisgarh. The pattern of the development of the Dadu Panth, a regional *nirgun* bhakti sect centered in the Rajasthani princely state of Amber, was affected as well by cultural and historical factors which were

unique to it, but have as yet remained unstudied.

The objective of this dissertation, then, is to analyze the rise of the Dadu Panth within its historically specific circumstances, to provide a distinct background and setting within which to view its development; and furthermore, to situate the local context within the broader social and political structure to which it belongs. There were multiple factors, chief among them: the region itself and the traditions of bhakti and Islamic devotion which had previously taken root there; the unique nature of the political interaction between Amer State and the Mughal court, and the numerous cultural effects of that interaction; the relative lack of opposition from antagonistic forces due to the protected position of Amer; the Rajput ethos that was nurtured, promulgated and introduced into the panth by the Naga[1] branch; other Vaishnava traditions in Amer with which the Dadu Panth became to some degree identified; the imposition of a classical Hindu value system by Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II in the first half of the eighteenth century; and the widespread militarization that characterized the latter half of the eighteenth century.

In order to understand the context in which the devotees and disciples who had been attracted to Dadu and his message of *nirgun* bhakti organized themselves and attempted to propagate his message and exemplify it in their lives, this study will explore certain aspects of the contemporary society, particularly during the periods of greatest sectarian formulation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. To provide this background for an understanding of the factors that affected the metamorphosis experienced by the Dadu Panth, Chapter One discusses the bhakti movement and the spread of popular devotionalism in north India and Rajasthan, the primary texts consulted in this study, and the sources of information about

[1] "Naga" is derived from the Sanskrit/Hindi word for naked, implying that these armed sadhus were at one time scantily clad as they went into battle. The armed Dadupanthi ascetics became known as Nagas, a term applied as well to armed ascetics with other sectarian affiliations. Shaiva Nagas were frequently also referred to as *gosains* or *sannyasis*, while Vaishnava Nagas were often called *vairagis*.

Dadu and the Dadu Panth. Utilizing the narrative of one of those texts, the earliest biography of Dadu, the *Dadu Janam Lila* of Jan Gopal, the events of Dadu's life and the earliest days of the panth are recounted.

Vital factors in this study are the role of the ruling family of Amer, the Kacchwahas, and the Rajput ethos that they both symbolized and internalized. Chapter Two discusses the Rajputs, the constituent elements of a Rajput ethos, and the relationship between Rajputs and Rajasthan, the land in which the Dadu Panth developed. It delineates the rise of the Kacchwahas and their state of Amer, especially after their alignment with the Mughal Empire in 1562 CE. Significant factors discussed are the religious policies of the Kacchwahas, and how their symbiotic relationship with the Mughals and their culture impacted the sociocultural and political life of the state.

Chapter Three is a study of the public life and religious policies of Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II of Amer, who left a lasting effect upon the principles and practices of not only the Dadu Panth, but upon north Indian Vaishnava religion in general. His call for a unified, reformed Vaishnava ethos to which all of the new bhakti sects were expected to adhere was instrumental in compelling independent bhakti communities such as the Dadu Panth to affiliate themselves with established Vaishnava traditions and to nominally identify themselves as Vaishnava.

Chapter Four considers the rapid expansion and developing influence of groups of armed mercenary ascetics collectively known as Nagas. It traces the history of their growth and examines possible reasons for their rapid expansion in the second half of the eighteenth century. Although Shaiva *sannyasis* of the Dasnami orders had been organized into armed parties for some time, the armies of Vaishnava ascetics were not organized until the first half of the eighteenth century. This chapter scrutinizes the arguments concerning when and where

they were organized, and determines that they were formally organized in Jaipur only in the 1730s, a conclusion at variance with much of the previous scholarship on the subject. Because the Nagas became such a dominant political force in north India, specific attention is paid to two exemplary Naga leaders: "Raja" Himmat Bahadur Anup Giri, a Shaiva *sannyasi* who was arguably one of the most powerful figures in the politics of north India in the late eighteenth century; and Swami Balanand, a Ramanandi *mahant* from Jaipur who is credited with initiating the organization of armed Vaishnava ascetics.

Chapter Five traces the history of the branch of the Dadu Panth that became organized into an armed Naga force in 1755 CE, and the nature of the Rajput ethos by which it was characterized. By closely examining translations of texts by two sectarian authors, the seventeenth-century *Bhaktamal* of Raghodas and the nineteenth-century *Bansadipika* and *Sundaroday* of Mangaldas, a clear picture emerges of the shifting values of the Dadupanthi Nagas as they responded to changes within the sociocultural milieu of Amer. Deriving its heritage from ascetics who belonged to the royal families of Amer and Bikaner, this branch was throughout its history dominated by Rajputs belonging primarily to the Kacchwaha clan. Initially, during the seventeenth century when Amer was a cultural and political refuge within the Mughal Empire, they engaged in the literary activities appropriate to Rajput nobility of the time. Later, when Jaipur became engulfed in increasingly chaotic social and political conditions, they developed a distinctly militaristic ethos that exhibited more traditional Rajput traits of pride and glory in battle.

Chapter Six considers the impact of the Dadupanthi Nagas upon the religious ideology and practices of the Dadu Panth. As they became dominant in terms of wealth and numbers in the late eighteenth century and, as their dual identities as Rajput warriors and Dadupanthi ascetics came to the fore, they injected a number of new and even anomalous elements into

the Dadu Panth which have caused later observers to view the precepts and customs of the contemporary Dadupanthis as having degenerated from the authentic message of Dadu.

Chapter Seven reviews the evidence that the ideology of the modern Dadu Panth was significantly impacted by processes of Sanskritization and Vaishnavization specifically related to the control exercised by Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II (1699-1743 CE), and by the impact of a Rajput ethos brought to the panth by Naga branch of Dadupanthis. Both processes were greatly influenced by Jaipur's position *vis-a-vis* the Mughal hegemony as well as by bardic traditions emphasizing particular traits among the dominant Rajput clans of the region. Despite superficial similarities to other bhakti sects such as the Sikhs or the Kabir Panth, the development of the Dadu Panth took place due to singular circumstances which affected its particular ethos in a manner that created a community with a unique synthesis of practices drawn from a variety of sources.

Hindus and Hinduism

While there are many porous, and therefore problematic terms such as "Hindu," "sect,"[2] or "Rajput" that will arise in the course of my exposition, it is not my purpose herein to argue the fine points of their applicability. Suffice it to say that for much of the time these events were taking place these terms connoted open-ended, rather than firmly bounded, categories.

The use of the term "Hindu" to describe the mosaic of variegated and multiform beliefs and practices indigenous to the Indian subcontinent is fraught with problematics.

[2] See Eschmann 1997 on the inaccuracy of the term to describe the various Indian religious traditions, or *sampradays*. Romila Thapar (1989, 216) has pointed out that Hindu sects, unlike those of other religions such as Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam, "often had distinct and independent origins" that made assimilation or reassimilation possible. That is, many Hindu sects arose independently, usually centered around a charismatic personality, rather than branching off from existing sects.

Much recent scholarship has tried to define what does or doesn't constitute Hinduism, how to resolve the many contradictory systems into one definable system called Hinduism, and so on.[3] What is clear in all of these analyses is that Hinduism as a category is a relatively recent, purely Western conceptualization of the religious and social practices of the majority of non-Muslim Indians. Still, my response to the question raised by Heinrich von Stietencron-- "If the above argument is correct, is it necessary to abandon the term 'Hinduism' altogether? -- would be be the same as his: "I do not think so....The term 'Hinduism' can be retained, but with a shift in meaning" (von Stietencron 1997, 48). Although I may contrast the principles of the Dadu Panth with those of Hinduism, or "caste Hinduism," to use David Lorenzen's (1987) terminology in contradistinction to the "non-caste Hinduism" of the reformist, *nirgun* bhakti sects, it is not therefore necessarily an implication that something like a hegemonic, homogeneous system of worship actually did or does exist. In fact, in eastern Rajasthan after the early sixteenth century the dominant religious orientation was toward sectarian Vaishnavism and the worship of Ram and Krishna. For the sectarian Vaishnavas and for the Dadupanthis, the Shaiva *sannyasis* were more likely to have been perceived as the religious Other than even Muslims. Thus, although there were certainly Shaivas in Jaipur during the centuries in question, it was a distinctly Vaishnava milieu in which the Dadu Panth developed.

For Dadu, who used the word in his verse, "Hindu" was always contrasted with "Turk," the latter indicating Muslims and the former indicating, by way of contrast, non-Muslims in India. It was a cultural connotation; for Dadu, they had different customs, different names for the deity, yet shared numerous commonalities. In Rajasthan in the eighteenth century, it was occasionally but ineffectively used as a call to arms, for the

[3] See Dube 1998, 4-7; Frykenberg 1997; Malik 1997; Oberoi 1994, 1-18; Smith 1989; Sontheimer 1997; von Stietencron 1997

"Hindus" and the "*pagaribands*" (turban-binders) to unite against the Muslims.[4] For Rajputs, a more clear delineation existed between the people of "Hindustan" (the land of the Hindus) and the "Deccanis" (Marathas). That is, Hindustan as the place of the Hindus clearly referred to India north of the Chambal River and denoted a certain culture and set of values rather than a religious persuasion.

Contrary to contemporary assertions of prolonged cultural and religious conflict between Muslims and Hindus in Rajasthan and other areas of north India, there is in Rajasthan no evidence of fundamental conflict on a societal level during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Norman Ziegler, a historian of Marwar, has observed regarding this period: "Outside of a few references to antipathies caused by conversion attempts, there are no indications of overt cultural conflict between Hindus and Muslims.....To the contrary, a real joint culture appears to have emerged in this area very early" (1976, 239-240). That is, aside from political antagonism between particular Muslim rulers and particular Hindu rulers which was not substantially different than antagonism between Hindu and Hindu or between Muslim and Muslim, there was a good deal of cultural tolerance and even interaction between the two communities. Particularly after the alliances of most of the major Rajput states with the Mughal Empire, there was a wholesale adoption of Islamicate[5] ideas that resulted in the development of a Mughal-Rajput synthesis in a variety of cultural spheres. Initially, it

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[4] The term appears in a letter (KD 1048) written in 1803 CE from the Maratha leader Daulat Rao Scindia to Maharaja Sawai Jagat Singh of Jaipur in which he suggests they join together to drive out the British, called *firanghis* (foreigners). He wrote, "If the country and the Hindu religion is to be saved from the '*firanghis*' all the *pagaribands* should unite and strive to get rid of them." The Maharaja, acutely aware of the volatility of alliances with the Marathas, declined (Bahura 1988).

[5] I adopt the use of this term, rather than Islamic, from the usage proposed by Phillip Wagoner (1996, 855) following the example of Marshall Hodgson in *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization.* Vol. 1. *The Classical Age of Islam* (1974). In that sense, "Islamic" refers to specifically religious ideas while "Islamicate" refers to predominantly secular (to the degree that the religious and secular can be dissociated) sociocultural symbols, practices and ideas that are traditionally associated with Islam.

developed in the elite courts in terms of language, dress and manners[6] as well as all forms of artistic expression (Goetz 1950, 180). Later, as more and more common men became involved in the Mughal military, it spread to the towns and villages of local *thakurs*, and was taken into the *darbars* of *mahants* and ascetics.[7] Eventually, it filtered down to the local level where even today Rajput women in the rural villages of Rajasthan practice *purdah*, most of them unaware that it was originally an Islamic custom.

The bhakti movement in north India

The sect founded by the followers of Dadu, the Dadu Panth, was connected ideologically with the *bhakti* movement, a devotionalist movement that began in South India in the first millennium CE and gradually moved northward in the ensuing centuries. It took many forms, but they all had several things in common: the idea that a relationship based on personal devotion to one's chosen deity was not only possible, but was preferable to a relationship relying upon intermediaries such as priests; a preference for expressing that devotion through poetry and song; and an emphasis upon the role of the guru,[8] or teacher, in imparting to one the knowledge of how to proceed along the path of devotion. In doing so, bhakti was always reformist in its nature, attempting to integrate values of social equality and personal salvation with established values of the Sanskritic tradition. Even in the early bhakti poetry of the Alvars and Nayanars of South India, composed hundreds of years before the movement reached the north, there are elements of social protest and dissent (Champakalakshmi 1996).

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[6] See Wagoner 1996 for a study of this process in the court of Vijayanagar in south India.
[7] Richards' (1993) description of the audiences of the imperial court during which "formal rituals of authority and submission were enacted by gift exchange" of clothing, gold coins and so forth does not significantly differ from descriptions of audiences before noted *mahants* of the eighteenth century.
[8] See Gold 1987 for an analysis of the role of the guru in these devotionalist sects.

Particularly in North India, proponents of bhakti adopted one of two, not exclusively distinct, approaches: *sagun*, indicating that they worshipped a deity "with qualities" or form, either in the person of one of the incarnations of Vishnu such as Ram or Krishna, or in some representative iconic form; and *nirgun*, meaning that they worshipped a deity "without qualities" or form, abjuring the use of icons and images and concentrating upon the deity perceived as existing equally within the hearts of all.[9] While elements of the bhakti style of devotion were incorporated by both Shaivas and Vaishnavas, in Rajasthan and other regions of north India it manifested primarily among Vaishnavas, among worshipers of the avatars of Vishnu, Ram or Krishna. In this sense, those who promulgated *sagun* bhakti of one or the other naturally felt some affinity for one or the other of the *catuh sampraday*, the four orthodox communities of Vaishnava philosophy and belief that had been recognized in North India since about 1500 CE (Farquhar 1920, 327).[10] These were the Sri Sampraday, comprised of Ramanujis and later Ramanandis; the Brahma Sampraday, known as Madhavas; the Rudra Sampraday, known as Vishnuswamis; and the Sanakadi Sampraday, known as Nimbarks. All originated in south India as philosophical schools based upon the philosophies of, respectively, Ramanuja, Madhavacarya, Vishnuswami, and Nimbark. However, in their move north the connection with the original traditions became in some cases quite tangential.

The leading voices of *nirgun* bhakti, those who established communities of believers, tended to be more individualistic and idiosyncratic. For one thing, the charismatic founders of particular *panths* or communities of devotees tended to come from the lower castes, even the

[9] Regarding the *sant* or *nirgun* bhakti movement, see Schomer 1987; Chaturvedi 1964; Gold 1987; Hawley 1995; Lele 1981; Lorenzen 1995,1996; Sharma 1987; Pandey 1996a. Regarding the *sant* movement in Rajasthan, see Pemaram 1977; Dadhich 1991; Narayandas 1980; Sharma 1997; Shukla 1992, 1996; Parik 1975; Lath 1999.

[10] Farquhar bases his estimation in part upon the fact that the theoretical organization must have occurred prior to the rise of the popular sects of Chaitanya and Vallabha in the sixteenth century, but after the *sampradays*, which had originated in the south, had become established and somewhat independent in the north.

untouchable castes, as opposed to the well-known *sagun* founders and poets who belonged to Brahmin and other twice-born castes and were more often than not affiliated with established sectarian communities. For this reason, not just the founders, but also the *panths* and sects founded by them or their followers have been seen by scholars as representing modes of subaltern resistance, often influenced by the Islamic model of social equality, against the hegemonic system of caste Hinduism.[11] Tara Chand, for instance, in his frequently cited examination of the influence of Islam on Indian culture, says of the founders of the *nirgun* paths that they were influenced by Islam,[12] and that they "mostly belonged to the lower castes and their movement represents the urge of the unprivileged masses to uplift themselves" (1963, 91), a comment repeated almost word for word by Daniel Gold (1994, 247), among others. While it is arguably true that the panths founded in the names of Kabir, Raidas and Ramanand, which even today are comprised of large numbers of individuals from the oppressed castes, originally represented a movement of the underprivileged, it can not truly be said of the Dadu Panth as it has developed. Although there is considerable evidence that Dadu was of low social origins (a fact generally denied in one way or another by contemporary Dadupanthis), preached social equality in his poetic compositions, and counted Muslims and non-twice-born Hindus among his disciples, since at least the eighteenth century the Dadu Panth has admitted renunciants only from the dominant castes of Rajasthan, predominantly Brahmins, Rajputs, Charans, and Jats.

There has been much speculation as to the reasons for the appearance and popularity of the devotionalism of bhakti in north India in the fifteenth century. It has been linked in various ways to the incursions of Muslims into North India. First, it has been viewed as a

[11] See Dube (1998) on the Satnam Panth; Lorenzen (1987a, 1987b) on the Kabir Panth; Schaller (1995) on the Ravidas Panth.

[12] See also Aziz Ahmad (1964, 141-152), who believes that the *nirgun* bhakti poets derived much of their inspiration from Islam, specifically Sufism

method of incorporating and retaining depressed classes, banned from worship in Brahminical temples and "stunned" by the violence of Muslim raids, who otherwise might have been attracted to Islam or forced to become Muslims, "within the fold of Hinduism" (Sharma 1968, 239-240). Others have seen the *nirgun* bhakti movements of Kabir, Guru Nanak, and Dadu as deeply affected by the aniconic and egalitarian message of Islam transmitted in India by wandering Sufi *pirs*. While all of these *sants* were clearly familiar with Islam, such claims tend to ignore two significant points: that, until perhaps a few hundred years before the Common Era, indigenous "Hindu" religion was itself aniconic, and worship was directed toward a deity described in early Upanishads as being without qualities; and that most of these poets in their verse equally decried formulaic Islam and formulaic Hinduism.

Alternatively, bhakti (particularly *sagun* bhakti) has been seen as a way to bring local cults and sacred centers "within the expansive Puranic fold through the process of identification" (Chattopadhyaya 1994, 198-199). In this way, local and regional deities, even tribal deities, could be brought into the realm of Puranic Hinduism through identifying them as alternative forms of Vishnu, Shiva, or Devi. A clear example of this is the cult of Jagannath in the state of Orissa in which an image clearly identifiable as a tribal deity has become identified as a form of Vishnu, specifically a form of Krishna (Eschmann 1978). In Rajasthan, an important regional example is the deity Bhaironji, who has come to be identified as a local form of Bhairava, himself a form of Shiva, although the iconic images of Bhaironji bear no resemblance to Shiva in any of his pan-Indian forms.

Of course this is one of the characteristic features of "Hindu" religious formation during the medieval and premodern period of 1500-1800 CE.[13] There was a great deal of fluidity and overlap in religious practice, and religious and social identity to the extent that

[13] The conditions described may well have prevailed at other times and places. However, for the most part my analysis is centered on the region of Rajasthan during this period.

neither established systems of Hindu belief nor any of the reformist Hindu movements were sufficiently heterogeneous that they could be viewed as a separate, isolated cultural entity. They all existed within a defined cultural spectrum in which there was a good deal of overlap and permeability. Even earlier in the history of the Indian subcontinent, reformist movements such as Buddhism and Jainism shared sufficient commonality with early Hinduism that exchange and interpenetration of ideas and practices came quite naturally. And, just as popular Hindu practice incorporated ideas and practices from the Buddhist and Jain traditions (and vice versa), so did popular Hindu practice, even those strands not formally affiliated with any of the bhakti traditions, incorporate much of the ethos of bhakti. As the early twentieth-century scholar J. N. Farquhar has stated in writing of the influence of Ramanand, considered in one sense or another the progenitor of the *nirgun* bhakti sects in north India, "The ordinary Hindu householder who worships Ram and Sita belongs to no sect or sub-sect; yet his thought and his practice are saturated with the ideas of Ramananda..." (1920, 328).

With the appearance of a new charismatic personality, a community of believers would develop around that individual and as it coalesced would become known collectively as a *sampraday* or *panth.*[14] However, an individual, especially a householder, might well participate in the communal activities of a panth, or even more than one panth, and still adhere to deeply ingrained, traditional religious practices as well. For sadhus, who were initiated by a guru in a particular tradition and took certain vows, the boundaries were somewhat more clear, although none of the sectarian communities of Hindu believers had in their origins what might be termed clearly defined boundaries. At the same time, there were

[14] Cognate with the English word "path", a *panth* denotes a collection of believers or devotees, but without particularly clear cultural and social boundaries. See W. H. McLeod's (1978) discussion on the problematics of its usage.

multifarious influences upon each religious community, so that none could truly be regarded as single and undifferentiated; they all partook to one degree or another of the available traditions so that each became an amalgam of Sanskritic, indigenous local, and other influences. There existed, as it were, a pan-Indian grammar of devotion that included such elements as *puja*, *arati*, circumambulation, and a regard for sacred topography. Even reformist *nirgun* sects did not significantly alter such standard modes of devotion in their own practices. Yet one characteristic that many of the different traditions of the bhakti movement also shared was what Fred Smith has termed "an ambiguity, bred of a corresponding tension, between embracing the past and breaking away from it. This is revealed in a rhetoric that is consistently anti-Vedic while at the same time proclaiming itself and its texts...to be in fact Vedic" (Smith 1998, 22). In the instance of the Dadu Panth, this tension manifests in the rejection of the worship of Vaishnava deities while picturing Dadu as somehow guided by them, if not replacing them. It manifests in the rejection of Vedic rites while asserting that Dadu is an incarnation of the Vedic *rishi* Sanaka. It manifests in rejecting image worship yet placing images of Dadu within temples, where devotees are never quite sure how to behave before them.

In Rajasthan, the evidence is that for centuries there was extensive interpenetration and interaction between various religious communities. Jain ideology impacted a number of other religious groups, and was itself impacted by them. And, although the degree of Sufi influence upon the *nirgun* panths of Dadu, Kabir and Guru Nanak has been a matter of some argument among scholars, recent scholarship has shown that at least some of the bhakti communities in Rajasthan are wholly or in part derived from localized Nizari Ismaili sects that were established by Nizari missionaries from Multan, who initially entered Rajasthan via established trade routes from Sindh and attracted converts in the cities and towns along those

routes. Later, they were forced to conceal their true identities and went "underground" for centuries following the severing of their connection with the leadership in Persia.[15] Even before the appearance of Dadu in Sambhar, other charismatic leaders had appeared in western Rajasthan proclaiming a similar message of social equality, inner transformation and, in some cases, a rejection of the worship of images.[16] Among the latter were Ramdevra in the fifteenth century; Jambhoji (1451-1536 CE), whose devotees became a sect, and later a a caste, known as the Bishnoi; and Jasnathji (1482-1506 CE). Others, notably Mirabai (c.1498-1537 CE) whose ancestral home is believed to be Merta, lent their voices to the tradition of *sagun* bhakti. Most of these communities began as open associations of local people of many different castes and classes. Only after years, sometimes centuries, of loosely structured and porous social organization did these religious communities, especially the newer bhakti communities, begin to exclude those who did not conform to newly codified definitions of what constituted valid membership in the community. For most, this process took place only in the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries. For instance, Richard Burghart (1978) has placed this process in the early eighteenth century for the Ramanandis, with further developments in the 1920s narrated by William Pinch (1996a, 242). David Lorenzen (1987b) has shown that the Kabir Panth was founded long after the demise of Kabir, while W. H. McLeod (1975) and, more recently, Harjot Oberoi (1994) have argued for the quite late organization of the Sikh Panth as a closed system that excluded and eliminated those who did not conform to the new ideology.

[15] See Dominique-Sila Khan's well-documented study of the Ismaili origins of the cult of Ramdevra, *Conversions and Shifting Identities: Ramdev Pir and the Ismailis in Rajasthan* (1997). Khan also argues for some Ismaili influence upon the Siddh community in Bikaner, followers of Jasnathji; the Bishnoi community, followers of Jambhoji; and even the Dadu Panth.

[16] See Pemaram 1977, the most detailed study of medieval religious movements in Rajasthan.

The Dadupanthi texts

This dissertation is based upon a number of primary written sources[17] composed in a variety of early dialects of what might be termed premodern Hindi: Braj Bhasha, Marwari, Dhundari, Pingal. Dadu himself wrote in a mixture of languages current in the region at the time, including elements of Marwari, Braj, Gujarati, Punjabi, and Persian.[18] Most of his compositions are in a mix of these sometimes referred to as *sadhu ki bhasha* (the language of sadhus, who used to travel about and pick up various languages and dialects); but some of his compositions are almost completely in Persian, while other compositions attributed to him are in Sanskrit or a mixture of Sanskrit and the vernacular.

Among primary literary texts utilized for this study, the most important are sectarian hagiographies and bardic accounts. Also of importance are the collected poems, couplets and songs of Dadu himself, as well as those of countless other Dadupanthis who engaged in literary composition. During the last years of Dadu's earthly life, in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, a remarkable transformation occurred in North Indian literature, much of it centered in and around Amer, particularly in the Dadupanthi and Ramanandi ascetic communities. It is not within the scope of this study to go into possible reasons for this sudden shift from oral to written expression, though one has to wonder whether it was in some way related to the newly developing Mughal-Rajput syncretic culture or to the introduction of some new technology of literary production. In 1600 CE, almost all vernacular songs and poetry, religious and secular alike, existed only in the oral culture. Much of it, such as the songs of Mirabai and the poetic verse of Kabir, had been circulating through oral transmission for a century or more. Between about 1600 and 1650, though, there was a

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[17] All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

[18] Regarding Dadu's use of language, see Pandey 1996b. The variety of dialects is a reflection of the cultural crossroads Rajasthan had become by the late sixteenth century.

virtual explosion of written composition. Much of it was new and was set down shortly after its composition, or was even composed while it was being written. Much of it was the writing down and then arranging and copying of oral materials. What is of great significance for this study is that the Dadupanthis were in the forefront of this project of writing down and copying the songs and verse of the *nirgun sants*, particularly those of Dadu. There is evidence that Dadu's words were recorded even while, or shortly after, he spoke. Certainly they were collected and recopied within only a few years after his death, if not earlier. For this reason, in studying the verses attributed to Dadu, there is less question about authenticity than there is about poets such as Mirabai.[19]

Within the Dadu Panth, it became popular to collect the songs and couplets of Dadu and other *nirgun sants* into volumes in which the verse was arranged thematically and the songs were arranged according to the *raga* in which they should be sung. The earliest of these is believed to be the *Angabandhu* of Dadu's close disciple, Rajjab. First produced in 1594-95 CE, it contained only the couplets and songs of Dadu, and thus may have been the prototype for *Dadu Vani*, which began to be produced somewhat later (Iraqi 1985, 41); it is noteworthy that the production of the similar collection known as *Guru Granth Sahib* by Guru Arjun is attributed to the same period, i.e., 1604 CE (Sen 1974, 104). Dadupanthis were innovators in the production of two other types of collections which first appeared in the early seventeenth century: the *Panch Vani*, which originally contained the verses, arranged thematically, of the *nirgun sants* Dadu, Namdev, Kabir, Raidas, and Hardas, but later included contributions from a number of different *sants*; and the *Sarvangi*, which was stylistically similar to the *Angabandhu* of Rajjab.

The earliest known manuscript of a *Panch Vani*, dating from 1614 CE, is in the

[19] See Hawley 1988 for a discussion of the issues of authenticity.

collection of Ramkripalu Sharma of Jaipur. *Sarvangis* were produced by, among others, Rajjab and Gopaldas, a disciple of Dadu's close disciple Santdas, who produced his in 1627 CE.[20] The *Sarvangi* of Gopaldas contains *padas* and *sakhis* attributed to at least 138 identified *bhaktas* and *sants*, including the five favorites (Dadu, Namdev, Kabir, Raidas, and Haridas), Pipa, Nanak, Surdas, Bajid, Gorakhnath, and such Dadupanthis as Rajjab, Garibdas, Bakhna, Jagjivandas, Jagannath, and Jan Gopal (Callewaert 1993, 18-29). Other Dadupanthi *Sarvangis* include those of Swamdas (1636 CE), Narharidas (1676 CE), Jagannathdas (1711 CE), Ram Dayal (1745 CE), Ganga Ram (1748 CE), Charandas (1762 CE) and Ram Ghandas (1784 CE) (Iraqi 1985, 37-38). *Sarvangis* were produced during the same period by other *nirgun* sects in Rajasthan such as the Niranjanis and Ramsnehis.

Additionally, many Dadupanthi sadhus throughout the years composed their own poetry and songs, with each sadhu's works being collected into his own *vani*, or body of works. These appear to have been copied and recopied by Dadupanthis over the centuries, the most popular verses being collected in small *gutikas*, pocket-sized compilations of verses and couplets that could be kept with one and used for daily reading and meditation. The earliest extant *gutika* dates from 1666 CE but they are believed to have been produced prior to that (ibid, 38). One can still find in collections in Rajasthan literally thousands of these *gutikas* and hundreds of manuscripts of compositions attributed to many of the seventeenth-century Dadupanthis. Narayandas, in his discussion of each individual disciple in *Dadu Panth Paricay* (1978-79), mentions whether he is reputed to have composed a *Vani* and whether any of his compositions are still extant. Virtually none of these have been published or translated, and many have already been lost or destroyed.

The first of the hagiographies of Dadu was composed by his disciple Jan Gopal

[20] See Shahabuddin Iraqi's edition of *The Sarvangi of Rajjabdas* (1985) and Winand Callewaert's edition of the *The Sarvangi of Gopaldas* (1993).

within two decades after his death so that, despite its hagiographical nature, it is in many respects a reasonably reliable account of Dadu's public life. It falls into the category of *parchai* literature, that is, biographical introductions to the lives of saints and great devotees. The earliest of such literature in Hindi[21] concerning the *sants* and devotees (*bhaktas*) were the eights *parchais* of Anantadas, who was a *pota* (second-generation) disciple of the *rasik* Ramanandi Agradas and a supposed fellow disciple of Nabhadas at Rewasa, just northwest of the town of Amer. He had begun composing *parchais*, or introductory stories, about famous *bhaktas* such as Namdev, Pipa, and Kabir; his *Namdev Parchai* has been dated approximately 1588 CE (Lorenzen 1992, 10).

Chronologically, the next important work of Dadupanthi literature utilized in this study is the *Bhaktamal* of Raghodas, a Dadupanthi of Rajput origin in the lineage of *Bare* Sundardas, who composed his laudatory account of famous saints and devotees in 1660 CE.[22] The edition used in this study is the critical edition published in 1965 by the Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute in Jodhpur (Nahata 1965). The earliest popular *Bhaktamal* ("garland of devotees")[23] had been composed by Nabhadas, a disciple of Agradas, and approximate contemporary of Anantadas. Agradas, a disciple of the noted Krishnadas Payahari, the founder of the Ramanandi monastic center at Galta, had in the late sixteenth century founded his own monastic center at Rewasa, about 40 kilometers northwest of Amer, where he established the *rasik* school of Ramanandi devotion noted for its literature

[21] This type of literature had been composed earlier in Sanskrit.

[22] Some scholars, including Callewaert, have argued that, based upon the date given by Raghodas at the end of his *Bhaktamal*, it was composed in VS 1777 or 1770 (1720 or 1713 CE). However, these dates seem too late given the tradition that Raghodas met his guru, Haridas, in Amer sometime prior to the death of Raja Man Singh in 1614 CE. In recent years, the general consensus agrees with Nahata's interpretation of the date as VS 1717 (1660 CE).

[23] Intended as an aid to devotional meditation, as a sort of literary rosary, most *bhaktamals* contain highly condensed references to famous *bhaktas* (devotees) with a few descriptive epithets to jog the memory, since the stories would have been familiar from the oral traditions. Nabhadas' composition names about 600 *bhaktas*, while that of Raghodas names about 1200.

expressive of the sweetness of Ram and Sita (Maheshwari 1980, 106-109). The *Bhaktamal* of Nabhadas is generally considered to have been composed sometime after VS 1686 (1629 CE); Nahata speculates that it was sometime in the period VS 1689-1700 (1632-1643 CE) (Nahata 1965, "gh"). The oldest known manuscript of the *Bhaktamal* of Nabhadas, located in the Saraswati Bhandar in Udaipur, dates from 1667 CE.

Primarily glorifying the names of Vaishnava devotees, Nabhadas' composition significantly failed to mention Dadu, a contemporary about whom he would undoubtably have heard and who was "in the neighborhood," so to speak. This may account for the tradition that Raghodas was asked by Prahladdas, the guru of his own guru, Haridas, to compose a *Bhaktamal* that included Dadu and famous Dadupanthi disciples and devotees, in addition to other great Vaishnava devotees, as a response to Nabhadas. The commentary by Chaturdas, added in 1800 CE, does assert that the *Bhaktamal* was written at the suggestion of Prahladdas. In the *tika* (commentary) Chaturdas writes the following by way of explanation:

> 631.
> Nabha's guru Agra(das) mercifully first gave the command
> to create a *Bhaktamal* of *sakhis* and *chappais*.
> Later, Prahlad expressed the opinion to Ragho that he should
> make a list of *sants*, that such a thing would give pleasure.

Even prior to Raghodas' composition of his *Bhaktamal*, several had been composed by companions of Dadu such as Jagga and Chainji, but they were both quite short, consisting primarily of strings of names. The *bhaktamal* as a sectarian literary form seems in subsequent years to have become popular as a means of associating a particular religious community (*sampraday*) within the continuum of religious movements in South Asian history, for the Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute has published *bhaktamals* produced in Rajasthan mostly in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by a variety of *sampradays*: Ramsnehi,

Niranjani, Ramopasak, Dadupanthi, Radhavallabhi, Hit Harivamsh, and Jain.[24]

Finally, my account relies heavily upon two unpublished manuscripts by Mangaldas, a Dadupanthi Naga *mahant* of Charan origins, who composed a number of typically bardic works. He lived in a village near Udaipur (the seat of the Udaipur *jama'at* of Dadupanthi Nagas in the region of Shekhawati) and is known to have composed a number of works, including *Sundaroday, Guru Paddhati, Tark Khandan, and Bansadipika* (Jigyasu 1976, 48). His *Sundaroday* is a richly detailed and heroic account of the origins and battles of the Dadupanthi Nagas through the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Because it refers briefly to events in Jaipur surrounding the Mutiny of 1857 CE, it can be said to have been composed within a few years after that date. It exists only in manuscript; in fact, although many Dadupanthis claim to have owned or seen such a manuscript, it appears that the only known manuscript version of *Sundaroday*, that which was in the possession of the Niwai Mahant Ram Prasad, disappeared sometime in the late 1980s or early 1990s. A good deal of my time in Jaipur was spent following leads concerning its whereabouts, though without success. Monika Horstmann, who has been working with Dadupanthi literature for twenty years, has agreed with me that, for all intents and purposes, it is lost. All that remains are a score or so of passages quoted in Ratan Lal Mishra's *Dadupanthi Naga Samuday: Sadhana evam Sahitya* (1997).[25] Mishra had held the copy belonging to Mahant Ram Prasad for some

[24] See also Callewaert 1994b.

[25] I am grateful to Dr. Mishra, who first allowed me to read the manuscript of his book prior to its publication and who introduced me to several important figures within the Dadu Panth, notably the principal Naga mahant, Ram Prasad. It should be noted that Mishra's book, although generally unbiased, tends at times toward hyperbole. It should be further noted that the book was published by a Dadupanthi publisher, Hanumandas Swami, and that the introduction is by Ramanand Swami of Dausa. The latter had objected to several representations of Dadu and the Dadu Panth made by Mishra and suggested, but did not insist, that they be changed. However, in his introduction, Ramanand Swami does present a synopsis of the current views of Dadupanthis: that Dadu incarnated in response to Muslim atrocities; that Dadu actually had no caste, since he "manifested" rather than being born of a mother; that Dadupanthis have never initiated Muslims or members of low castes, a fact said to have been obscured and misinterpreted by foreign scholars.

time while composing that work, originally a doctoral dissertation at Rajasthan University completed in 1991. The other manuscript, upon which I most heavily rely, is also from the collection of Ram Prasad. Entitled *Adi Bhagat Dadudayal Muni Sant Bansadipika*[26] (hereinafter *Bansadipika*), it is an abbreviated history of the extended Naga lineage that seems to have been composed somewhat earlier than *Sundaroday*, but still in the mid-nineteenth century. The manuscript, a photocopy of which I was able to obtain, was recopied in 1930 CE under the direction of Purohit Sri Hari Narayan by Gopichand Sharma, who describes himself as a Gaur Brahmin resident of Jaipur. It consists of eleven *tarangs* (sections) of various lengths, whereas the longer *Sundaroday* contains fourteen *tarangs*. Both are written in a variety of poetic forms and meters.

Most of the works of Mangaldas fall into the category of what can be termed Charan, or bardic, literature. In Rajasthan, the Charans are a highly esteemed caste seen as occupying a social position slightly lower than that of Brahmins but above that of Rajputs, with whom they maintain a symbiotic relationship. Traditionally, Rajput men did not marry Charan wives or even have Rajput concubines, as it was deemed tantamount to incest (Joshi 1999, 312). Like Rajputs, with whom they often shared company, Charans would eat meat, drink liquor and engage in martial activities.[27] Yet they also excelled in literary pursuits, particularly in composing literature that eulogized the Rajputs by whom they were patronized (Banerjee 1983, 124). They were, and often still are, viewed as seers, intermediaries who are closer to the sacred than ordinary mortals. Many stories are still told in Rajasthan, particularly in more traditional and conservative districts such as Jodhpur, about the power of Charans and the combination of respect and fear they command. It is said, for instance, that it was considered

[26] Literally, "Light on the Lineage of *Sants* of the Seer and First Among Devotees, Dadu Dayal."
[27] In Rajasthan, Rajput women wear a distinctive style of dress traditionally worn only by themselves and women, making them indistinguishable to the viewer.

that killing a Charan was a sin comparable to killing a Brahmin, so that at times a Charan warrior could scatter his enemies just by charging straight at them and tempting them to kill him. At other times, he might cut himself and threaten to curse his potential assailants while throwing his blood at them (Bhattacharya 1968, 92-93).[28] Although, in a way, poetic composition and recitation was for them a "pastime" subordinate to the primary income-producing occupations of military service, agriculture, and horse and cattle trading (Ziegler 1976, 223), it was through their position as bards and genealogists for the Rajputs that the Charans gained their fame. Ziegler (1976, 225-226) has aptly stated that the role of the Charan is "not that of an 'objective' historian, but that of a seer, a guardian of legend and a conserver of tradition. As a seer, he is not a conscious manipulator of 'truth' and historical fact, but a preserver of the truth of what he sees. This truth is less in the realm of objective fact than in religious values and social ideals..." As such, the role of the Charan *vis-a-vis* the Rajput was not just to to record those events which expressed Rajput values, and to recite in poetic form those heroic events as a source of inspiration and legitimation; but they were also teachers, who constructed and disseminated paradigms for indoctrinating Rajput men and boys into the martial ethos of their caste (Harlan 1992, 50).

The bardic literature, then, must be read with care for it naturally tends to glorify and even exaggerate the heroic nature of the Rajput warrior. For one who wants 'objective' fact, it can be frustrating; however, for one who wants to understand the expressions of martial ethos inherent in Rajput culture, it can be of great value. Also, the later such literature was composed, the more it tends to adhere to something akin to objective description. Many decades ago, the foremost authority on the bardic literature of Rajasthan, Dr. Tessitori, cautioned that "there is probably no bardic literature in any part of the world, in which truth

[28] For more on the "protest suicide" and other assertions of power by Charans, see Weinberger-Thomas 1999, 58-67.

is so masked by fiction or so disfigured by hyperboles, as in the bardic literature of Rajputana (1917, 228). Yet, as Ziegler (1976, 237) has surmised, despite the hyperbole and even distortion found within the bardic literature, "information for periods after the mid-fifteenth century is reasonably reliable."

More problematic are the contemporary hagiographical compositions of Swami Narayandas, a prolific poet and author of what are considered by most Dadupanthis to be the definitive volumes on Dadu and the Dadu Panth, *Sri Dadu Caritamrit* (1975) and *Sri Dadu Panth Paricay* (1978-79). A man of inquisitive mind and prodigious memory, certainly it can be said of him that there is no one with his expanse of knowledge regarding the intricacies of Dadupanthi lineages and the individuals within them, yet there is no denying his inherent sectarian bias. As Daniel Gold has written regarding his works: "However accurate his depiction of the Dadupanthi sublineages may be as history, his text derives its importance largely as a mine of sectarian narrative" (1994, 243). Offering nothing in the way of dates, and little or no interpretation, Narayandas' narrative at times appears to be a circuitous maze of names and characters, all with complex ties to each other. Much of it resembles a *Bhaktamal*, for Narayandas clearly wants to mention every Dadupanthi sadhu he has ever heard of, even if he can't say much about him. It is clear that he utilized multifold sectarian manuscripts, as he mentioned to me when I met with the aging sadhu and scholar in his simple room in Ajmer in 1998, and that he also drew upon his personal memories and what he was able to "draw out from his wide circle of Dadupanthi acquaintances" (ibid., 260), as he had told Gold a decade earlier. Yet, as Gold observed, it does offer much to one who wants to derive from it a sectarian perspective. He has accurately noted that there seems to have been throughout the accounts of Dadu and the Dadupanthis an emphasis on royal ties and royal patronage that apparently reflects the political world in which Dadu and his spiritual descendants lived, and

that reflects the "Rajput political ideals of the Mughal period" (ibid., 245). However, despite the perspicacity of this observation, Gold was unable to adequately contextualize it, given his lack of familiarity with the basics of Dadupanthi history.[29] One of the goals of this dissertation, then, is to take Gold's perception of a relationship between Dadupanthi ideology and the social and political ideology of the Rajputs and to contextualize it. To do so requires an exegesis of both the macro view of Mughal policy and the changing sociopolitical conditions within Amer State, and the micro view of the internalization, retention and development of Rajput cultural values among members of one particular branch of the Dadu Panth, the Nagas. Somewhere between these two views, the focus will be on the course of the development of the Dadu Panth itself in response to the changing social and political conditions within Amer.

Sources of information about Dadu and his devotees

The earliest known account of Dadu and the Dadu Panth in English is that of H. H. Wilson, first published in 1828 CE in *Asiatick Researches*, volume XVI as *A Sketch of the religious sects of the Hindus*. Later it was reprinted in his *Religious Sects of the Hindus* (Wilson 1976, 57-58). It is significant for, as Winand Callewaert has indicated (1978, 32), the information contained in the article was repeated virtually verbatim in every article on Dadu in English for the next century. As it was based on oral reports obtained in Benares, it is not surprising therefore that Wilson mistakenly understood Dadu to have been a disciple in the

[29] Gold (1994) expresses a number of erroneous conceptions about Dadu and the Dadu Panth. Firstly, he perceives the sect as divided between soldiers and scholars, and mistakenly believes that they are separate categories, not cognizant of the fact that many Naga warriors were highly literate. Thus, he implies that Narayandas has given little attention in *Dadu Panth Paricay* to the Nagas because he is not one of them. Yet, in fact, Narayandas clearly states that he was raised in the Naga lineage based in Udaipur. In addition, Gold, who clearly has never visited Naraina, not only believes that Dadu's tomb is located there, but even offers the impossible observation that it "seems to have been treated in much the same way as tombs of many Indian holy men are today, particularly in Islamic traditions" (249).

direct line of Kabir, for he had noted that the "Dadupanthis maintain a friendly discourse with the followers of Kabir and are frequent visitors at the Chaura[30] (Benares)" (Wilson 1976, 58).

Wilson did get the basic facts of Dadu's life correct, though his chronology is faulty. He noted that Dadu was a cotton-cleaner (*pinjara*) by profession, that he was reputed to have been born in Ahmedabad (Gujarat) and later moved to Sambhar, that he disappeared at Bhairana where his followers "believed he was absorbed into the deity," and estimated that he must have flourished around 1600 CE (ibid., 57). Regarding the Dadu Panth, he noted that they bear no sectarian marks (*tilak*) nor *mala*, and that they wear a peculiar sort of round white cap with flaps behind.[31] In an oft-quoted account of the divisions of the sect, Wilson wrote that the Dadupanthis[32] are divided into three classes: the wandering *viraktas*; the mercenary, arms-bearing Nagas; and the "Bistaradharis,"[33] who follow "occupations of ordinary life." He added, however, that there are further subdivisions, or branches, about which he had no information.

In the introduction to his annotated translation of the *Sarvangi of Rajjab*, Callewaert (1978, 12-80) provides a comprehensive, annotated listing of the sources of information about the life of Dadu and the history of the Dadu Panth, from the first biography of Dadu by his disciple Jan Gopal to the first (and last) extensive study on Dadu in English, W. G.

[30] Wilson here refers to the principal Kabirpanthi *math* in Benares, located at Kabir Chaura in the north end of the city. The principal Dadupanthi *math*, long abandoned but currently being renovated by the Dadu Dayalu Mahasabha, is near Assi Ghat at the south end of the city, about an hour's walk from Kabir Chaura.

[31] This was true of only certain branches of Dadupanthis.

[32] Traditionally, the term "Dadupanthi" has referred exclusively to ascetic followers of Dadu. There have always been householder devotees of Dadu, usually known as *sevaks*, but little has been written about them even in sectarian accounts. Thus, when I use the term Dadupanthi, I am referring to Dadupanthi sadhus of various branches. Only in recent years, with a greater proportion of householders to ascetics, has the term become more broadly applied to adherents of the *panth* irrespective of their familial status.

[33] Wilson applies this term to householders, apparently. It's literal meaning is "bedroll carriers," but the term appears nowhere else in Dadupanthi discourse.

Orr's *A Sixteenth-Century Indian Mystic* (1947). Since Orr's publication, only two western scholars have dealt at any length with Dadu and the Dadu Panth. Though neither has dealt with more than limited portions of Dadupanthi history, I owe them both a tremendous debt of gratitude for their ground-laying efforts and for their feedback and assistance. Winand Callewaert of the Catholic University of Leuven is an inveterate collector of manuscripts who, in the 1970s and 1980s, collected many of them from the large Dadupanthi collections in Jaipur's Dadu Mahavidyalay and elsewhere in Rajasthan. Based upon those manuscripts, he has since published editions of the work of Dadupanthis such as Jan Gopal, Rajjab and Gopaldas. Monika Horstmann[34] of Heidelberg University began studying the Dadupanthis in the 1980s and has published on a variety of topics regarding them, although she has in recent years shifted her focus due to the Dadu Panth's declining numbers. Her interests have been primarily literary; she has published translations of Dadu's compositions into German (Thiel-Horstmann 1991), and published studies of Dadupanthi *jagarans* (all-night singing sessions) (Thiel-Horstmann 1985b) and the homilies of Mahant Hariramji (Thiel-Horstmann 1992, 1995). She has written one widely cited, though unpublished, paper on Dadupanthi Nagas (Thiel-Horstmann 1985a), and has also published on the social organization of present-day Dadupanthi sadhus (Thiel-Horstmann 1986; Horstmann 1997); more recently, she has written on the images of food in early Dadupanthi hagiography (Horstmann 1999c).

Most of the detail regarding the life of Dadu has been drawn at one time or another from the hagiographical *Dadu Janam Lila* of his immediate disciple Jan Gopal, originally composed within two decades after Dadu's death in 1604 CE (Orr 1947, 209; Callewaert 1978, 22). In this sense it is invaluable as an historical document for Jan Gopal records that he spent many years in the company of Dadu and even attended Dadu's interview with

[34] Her earlier publications appeared under the name Monika Thiel-Horstmann.

Emperor Akbar. Yet, as Orr and Callewaert have both cautioned, later recensions of the *Lila* contain significant interpolations.

Callewaert has published a critical edition and translation of Jan Gopal's biography, based upon early manuscripts dated 1658 and 1666 CE, in which he is able to distinguish the more important of such interpolations, which "illustrate the growing biases" among the early devotees of Dadu (1988, 11). He shows that later recensions contain alterations and interpolations that obscure Dadu's status as a *pinjara* and his Muslim associations, emphasize his celibacy, and describe ever more fantastic and miraculous events in his life. According to earlier versions, Dadu was a cotton-carder, he was married, and had a family. Callewaert points out, for instance that a verse in the early *Sarvangi* of Rajjab states that Dadu was born from the womb of a *dhuni* (cotton-carder) woman, a line that later Dadupanthis alternatively chose to translate as "Dadu was found in a river" (p. 13). Another sectarian source,[35] the early *Bhaktamal* of another of Dadu's disciples, Jagga, names Dadu's father (Lodi) and mother (Vasi), his wife (Nani), son(s) and two daughters.

> 34.
> Nani mother, the two girls
> Boys who are said to honor Ram.
> Father Lodi,[36] Mother Vasi
> Hawa[37] is called a sadhu, who is immersed in the path of Hari.

Other, non-sectarian sources, that contradict the later versions of the story of Dadu include one verse of the Maharashtrian *sant*-poet Tukaram (1598-1650 CE) and the

[35] Published as a supplement to the *Bhaktamal* of Raghodas by the Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute (Nahata 1965, 275-279).
[36] In later writings, the (adoptive) father's name is Brahminized into Lodi Ram, and he is described as a Nagar Brahmin of Ahmedabad.
[37] Hawa is traditionally said to be the name of one of Dadu's daughters.

Dabistan-i-mazahib (Shea 1843), a Persian chronicle written circa 1665 CE, both of which refer to Dadu as a cotton-carder, an occupation which in Rajasthan at that time would have been associated with a Muslim caste composed of recently converted low-caste Hindus.

Following the narrative of Jan Gopal as it appears in Callewaert's edition, it is possible to trace the important events of Dadu's life and career. Dadu[38] was born in 1544 CE near Ahmedabad in Gujarat (Chapter 1.5) in the home of a cotton-carder (1.6). A merchant in Ahmedabad who desired a son miraculously found him in the river and adopted him (1.6.1-1.6.5). When he was eleven years old, an old man appeared to him while he was playing, tested his compassion, and granted him liberation (1.7-1.11).[39] He began to preach at the age of 18 (1562 CE), became indifferent to the world, and began carding cotton as Kabir had become a weaver (1.12-1.16).

At that time, he left for Sambhar where he kept aloof, meditated, and "continually

[38] There has been much speculation about the origins of Dadu's uncommon name. Sen (1974, 108-109) has, for instance, suggested that it is a corruption of the Islamic name, Da'ud. This possibility is also offered by Chaturvedi in his *Uttari Bharat ki Sant Parampara* (The *Sant* Lineages of Northern India) (1964, 409-410). Perhaps more likely, given the coincidence that many of the places Dadu stayed in Rajasthan had been earlier associated with the Ismailis, is Dominique-Sila Khan's suggestion that he was named after a famous Gujarati Ismaili *pir* named Dadu (1997, 294). The simplest explanation of the derivation of his name can be deduced from the definition of "*dadu*" offered by R.S. McGregor in his Hindi-English dictionary (1993, 490). According to him, "*dadu*" is a variant of "*dada*" which means "brother" or "friend." In this sense it may be an attenuation of the common Rajasthani term for brother in the broadest possible sense, "*dadabhai*," meaning literally "brother (*bhai*) of the same grandfather (*dada*). But even this, particularly in the Marwari dialect of western Rajasthan is often pronounced as if it were "*dadubhai*." Later sectarians tacked on the epithet "*dayal*" (compassion), so that Dadu Dayal means 'the compassionate brother.'

[39] There has been much speculation about the identity of Dadu's guru, originally referred to here as Baba Buddhan ("the old man"). In later references, such as in the poetry of Sundardas the Younger, his name is Sanskritized into Vriddhanand. Most contemporary Dadupanthis assert that Dadu had no human guru, that the old man was actually God taking on form in order to make this contact with the youthful Dadu. However, Orr (1947, 54-56) mentions a tradition, still alive in the 1940s, that Dadu's guru was a certain Sheikh Buddhan of Sambhar. Orr interviewed his descendants, who still lived in Sambhar, and was presented with evidence of a long-time connection between the family and the *mahants* of Naraina which, they claimed, established an historical teacher-disciple relationship between Dadu and Sheikh Buddhan.

sang Kabir's poems and verses" (2.1-2.4).[40] In Sambhar he "dug and buried the Muslim path" and abandoned Hindu practices as well. Orthodox Hindu Brahmins and Muslim *qazis* began to criticize him and clash with him (2.5-2.18).[41]

Still in Sambhar, he continued to display miraculous powers. Muslims were offended when he was observed singing inside a (Hindu) temple and tried imprisoning him, but he appeared to people outside of the prison. Devotees in Sambhar held celebrations in seven different places and he appeared at all of them simultaneously. Unable to please either Muslims or Hindus, he decided to go to Amer (3.1-3.24).

Dadu went to Amer (circa 1579 CE) where he was greeted by Raja Bhagwantdas. Settling there, he had a constant flow of people coming to see him as his fame spread. To avoid dealing with such crowds, he began steadily carding cotton in hopes they would be uncomfortable with his low occupation and would go away, but the crowds kept coming. Still, he continued to card cotton as he spoke to them (4.1-4.6). Emperor Akbar heard of him and sent several invitations for him to visit.[42] Finally, he asked Raja Bhagwantdas to bring Dadu to see him. Dadu reluctantly agreed. He went (circa 1584-85 CE) accompanied by seven disciples and met up with Jan Gopal on the way (4.8-4.22).

Dadu arrived in Fatehpur Sikri and was met by Raja Bhagwantdas. Before meeting the Emperor, he was questioned by three of Akbar's friends and advisors: Abul Fazl, Raja

[40] According to other traditional sources, he wandered in Rajasthan and stayed for a while in Kardala, a mountaintop near Parbatsar on the western side of Sambhar Lake, before arriving in Sambhar circa 1568 CE at the age of 25.

[41] Callewaert points out that the line (2.10) regarding the *qazi* from Ajmer seems to indicate that he considered Dadu to be Muslim when he asks, with the *Qur'an* in his hand, "Why have you turned away from the (Muslim)path?" Callewaert has translated "*pherna*" as "upturned," but I believe "turned away" to be the clearer translation.

[42] Although there are many apocryphal stories of Akbar meeting famous holy men and women of the time, the fact remains that he was interested in various spiritual teachings and did seek out many such individuals during his lifetime. Bhagwantdas certainly would have had at least a passing familiarity with Dadu, and Jan Gopal claims to have been an eyewitness to the meeting, lending this story a greater degree of credibility.

Birbal,[43] and Tulsi. They asked him many questions and were greatly impressed by his responses (5.1-5.20). Abul Fazl and Bhagwantdas escorted Dadu to the presence of the Emperor, who asked him many questions (5.21-5.28). Dadu explained to Akbar about non-attachment. The Emperor was impressed and wanted him to return, but Dadu was not so inclined (6.1-6.12). Dadu agreed to spend several days in the palace of Birbal, where they had long conversations and Dadu was introduced to his wives (6.13-6.28). Dadu stayed for 4 (or 40) days, and went again to see Emperor Akbar accompanied by Jan Gopal. They had more conversation and Akbar was pleased. He offered gifts to Dadu, but they were refused. The *qazis* and *mullahs* in court were jealous of Dadu (7.1-7.28). He continued to stay with Raja Birbal, who offered him gold and other gifts, but Dadu had him distribute them to the poor. Birbal, deeply touched, pleaded with Dadu to stay (8.1-8.16). Dadu and his disciples left, staying in the forest, but sadhus of various persuasions came to find him. They stopped in Dausa and other places, and eventually returned to Amer (8.17-8.24).

In Sambhar, when he was 32, Dadu's son Garibdas had been born (1575 CE) of his wife, Nani. Garibdas had a sweet voice and was of an ascetic nature. Dadu's second son was Maskindas, who was devotional. Two daughters, Hawa and Bai, were born (9.1-9.7). After a year back in Amer, Dadu began to travel. As he traveled to Tonk and other towns and villages in Amer and the neighboring regions of Rajasthan, he attracted great crowds and his presence was celebrated everywhere in a festival-like atmosphere (9.10-9.27).

In Amer, the new Raja, Man Singh (1590-1614 CE), arrived with much pomp, but Dadu did not go to greet him. People began to slander Dadu, so the king went to see him to question him. He was pleased with Dadu's responses (10.1-10.28). Seeing that Man Singh was favorably inclined toward Dadu, the Brahmins complained again to the king. Torn

[43] Birbal, one of the Emperor's favorites, was a legendary storyteller and wit who had earlier been attached to the court of Amer (Sinha 1980, 28).

between pleasing the Brahmins and offending a *sant*, Man Singh went again to see Dadu who indirectly understood that the king wanted him to leave. Man Singh apologized, but Dadu was adamant about leaving Amer. The king bowed and became his disciple, later building a temple near the edge of the lake (11.1-11.8). Dadu left Amer (circa 1593 CE) and again began to wander from village to village, stopping for a long while in Kalyanpur (11.9-11.21) near Parbatsar.

In Khatu, Dadu came face to face with a mad elephant, but remained calm and unharmed.[44] He continued to travel from village to village where he attracted large crowds (12.1-12.29). Dadu continued to travel throughout Amer and Marwar where many festivals were organized in his honor (13.1-13.31). Dadu, accompanied by many disciples, continued to travel, accepting invitations to come to Sambhar, Naraina, Bhairana, Bichun, and other villages before settling again in Kalyanpur (14.1-14.34). Many people came and became his disciples; he traveled here and there, and again returned to Kalyanpur for one year (15.1-15.7).

In 1602 CE, Dadu became aware that he would depart from the world the following year. Narayandas (Khangarot), the Kacchwaha *thakur* of Naraina, invited Dadu to settle in Naraina. Dadu arrived at the *tripolia* beside the pond in Naraina.[45] While seated there Dadu

[44] A later version of this story says that the mad elephant was unleashed on Dadu by Raja Rai Singh of Bikaner, the nephew of *Bare* Sundardas. See DPP I:7. The latter, who had disappeared into the mountains years earlier, miraculously appeared and reprimanded his nephew. For Mishra, this is an example of the "protective function" of Rajputs later taken up by the Nagas (Mishra 1997, 140). This later version of the story then becomes a precursor to subsequent events of significance in Khatu, when the predominantly Rajput Dadupanthi Nagas fought to protect the temple of Khatu Shyamji in Khatu from Mughal attack in 1780 CE. See Chapter 5.

[45] The water tank and *tripolia* are believed to have been built in 1437 CE by Mujaheed Khan who had conquered the area (Gahalot 1966, 47). It seems significant that this spot, said to be where Dadu first stopped when he arrived in Naraina, is beside an ancient Muslim graveyard.

saw a cobra and followed it around the pond to its hole. There, underneath the khejri[46] tree beneath which he later died, he made his seat (*gaddi*) and a dwelling was built on the bank of the pond (15.8-15.17). On his deathbed, he answered many questions about what his disciples should do after his death; then Dadu passed away and many disciples gathered around his body (15.18-15.24). They decided to carry Dadu's body to the hill at Bhairana in a palanquin. They anointed his body with perfume and sandalwood paste, then departed singing (15.25-15.30). Others came to see Dadu's corpse, but it had disappeared. Only the palanquin remained. His disappearance was compared to that of Kabir (15.31-15.36).[47]

Shortly after Dadu's death, Garibdas organized a great festival and all the *sants* and devotees of Dadu were invited to Naraina. Beginning with the new moon in May, the celebrations lasted for one month. Garibdas gave away clothing and copious amounts of food to all (16.1-16.15). The gathered *sants* anointed Garibdas as the successor of Dadu and, with their blessing and support, he occupied his seat (16.16-16.29).

Throughout his life, clearly influenced by the example of Kabir (c. 1440-1518 CE), with whose verse and teachings he was very familiar, Dadu composed songs and couplets. The themes of his compositions are comparable to those of Kabir, but Dadu's tone is always less acerbic and more restrained. Perhaps the difference reflected a difference in personalities, or perhaps it reflected the more intensive Brahminical culture that surrounded Kabir in

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[46] The *khejri* tree, indigenous to desert areas of Rajasthan and a source of food and fuel, is considered sacred in several local traditions. For instance, in the Bikaner district, at the temple of Bhaironji at Kodomdesar and at the temple of Karni Mata at Deshnok, animals are tied to a *khejri* tree before being sacrificed. In Jodhpur, on the occasion of Dussehra, the erstwhile Maharaja of Jodhpur still symbolically worships his weapons and those of his nobles, a horse, and a *khejri* tree, as I observed during Dussehra celebrations at Mehrangarh Fort in Jodhpur in 2000. In a small, tiled courtyard off the main courtyard of the temple at Naraina is the dead stump of the khejri tree beneath which Dadu is said to have established his seat when he first arrived in Naraina, and in fact some Dadupanthis believe that his body was in fact buried there. Some groups of Dadupanthis gather there for *arati* and *bhajans*; certain of them appear to offer veneration there more often than within the temple itself.

[47] It should be noted that ,even at an early date, legends regarding Dadu's manifestation in a river and the disappearance of his body at his death closely resemble legends which were current about Kabir.

Benares. Both place the spiritual life beyond the confines of organized religion, whether Hindu or Muslim, and beyond the barriers of caste and class. For both, spirituality is an internal affair, a matter of the heart that requires practice of the repetition of the name of the supreme deity.[48] Both show a familiarity with the ideas of the Nath yogis, but Dadu has a greater knowledge of Islamic practices. For both, the most commonly used name for the formless deity is Ram, but Dadu uses as well Hari, Govinda, Allah, Rahim, and half a dozen others. Like the language of Kabir, the language of Dadu is in the local vernacular, and can occasionally be blunt. Dadu uses language a mixed language containing an even broader range of dialects than does the Awadhi of Kabir, revealing something of the crossroads that Amer represented in the sixteenth century.

Except for a few selections, Dadu's verse[49] has never been translated into English. There have even been relatively few studies of his verse and its themes. Many of his *dohas* are didactic and repetitive of the themes of non-attachment, repetition of the name, looking into the heart. Feeling little oppression at the time from the ruling classes, Dadu never sounds like a social revolutionary. While encouraging people of all classes to focus on true values in life, as when he admonished Birbal not to give up his position but rather to change his attitude,[50] Dadu seems to have accepted the social institutions of his day (Mukhia 1993, 63). There is little in the way of personal information that can be gleaned from Dadu's verses, though one can occasionally glimpse reflections of the society in which he lived. For instance, reflecting the burgeoning importance of royalty and their courts during the latter half of the sixteenth century, Dadu showed a keen familiarity with the courts and courtly behavior when he composed this song from the *Sarvangi of Gopaldas* (Callewaert 1993) in which he

[48] On the significance of the Name, see Callewaert 1994a.
[49] *Dadu Vani* contains more than 2000 couplets and 400 songs.
[50] In *Dadu Janam Lila*, 6.25-6.28.

compares himself to the court crier.

72.37
You are truly my Lord. Generous in action,
    you glance at me mercifully.
I am bound to your service.

You know everyone in your court, compassionate Lord
    of the downtrodden.
Your glance gives ecstasy to your servant,
    establishing ever-lasting happiness.

Everyone knows you are the Lord of the region,
    the Emperor of Creation.
You are truly the divine player playing in Creation.
    Give your loving glance.

I am your subservient doorkeeper,
    announcing people into the presence of Hari.
Dadu is at the door calling to the poor:
    "Won't you come and take *darshan*!"

Although Romila Thapar has rightly observed that, in general, bhakti sects "were confined to particular regions and were frequently unaware of their precursors or contemporaries elsewhere" (1989, 216), Dadu was very conscious that he was a successor to the *nirgun* bhakti traditions of Namdev (1270-1350 CE) and Kabir (d. 1518), for he frequently mentions them by name and implicitly acknowledges his debt to them. Clearly the term "bhakti" had acquired popular currency by the sixteenth century, for regarding it he exclaimed:

4.280.
'Bhakti, bhakti,' everyone says, but nobody knows what it is.
Dadu says, the bhakti of Bhagwan is always within the body. (DV)

The evidence from Jan Gopal's *Lila* is that, when questioned, Dadu would frequently

respond in the form of a couplet. At the devotional gatherings frequently mentioned by Jan Gopal, there would be collective singing of the songs composed by Dadu, as well as those of other *nirgun sants* such as Kabir, Raidas, Haridas and Namdev. Disciples of Dadu such as Rajjab, Bakhna, Chain, Jagannath and others began composing their own songs and couplets in emulation of their guru, Dadu. At first, as was the custom, these were memorized and recited or sung. Tradition mentions the disciple Mohan Das Daftari as the one who began to write down Dadu's utterances. The disciple Rajjab is credited with producing a collection of Dadu's songs arranged according to theme, known as *Angabandhu*, as early as 1594 CE, and to have first collected the compositions of the five most popular *sants* into what became known as *Panch Vani*. In the ensuing century, in particular, literary production and dissemination would become a hallmark of the ascetics of the Dadu Panth.

Even during Dadu's lifetime he had been able to travel widely in Amer and Marwar because there were many disciples scattered here and there throughout the towns and villages there and in surrounding regions. Dadu is said to have had 152 disciples, of whom 52 were sadhus who created *thambhas*, and 100 were (presumably married) householders known as *sevaks*. Thus the *thambha* at Naraina was but one of 52.[51] After the death of Dadu, with Garibdas as the nominal leader of a loosely organized and widely distributed *panth*, there was little in the way of central authority or a uniform approach to the practice of Dadu's version of devotionalism. Callewaert (1978) mentions indications in Rajjab's poetry of a rift between him and Garibdas, and there may have been other conflicts as the disparate community of believers tried to define how they would identify themselves and what would be the nature of their relationships with each other. Initially, the group referred to themselves as *Parabrahma ki Sampraday*, the community of Parabrahma. This may indicate that, despite Dadu's

[51] 52 is probably a symbolic number, as it is commonly cited in such instances in many Indian traditions.

profound charisma and personal charm, the early devotees thought of themselves as adhering to his message rather than him personally. In other words the community of believers had not yet become a full-fledged cult of personality nor, in the strict sense, a panth. Dadu himself had derided panths, so initially they tried to adhere to his sentiments.

> 13.48.
> Dadu: the Hindu says this path is mine,
> the Turk says it's always mine.
> Tell me, since you're such a clever seeker,
> where is the *panth* of Allah? (DV)

While the *mahant* of Naraina was considered in some sense a successor to Dadu, the annual gatherings there on the anniversary of Dadu's birth and death were often the only occasions on which large number of disciples would gather to meet and share experiences. At many of the *thambhas*, ascetics engaged in composing verse and songs, collecting remembered verses, and copying them in manuscript form. With no external forces, as the Sikhs in the Punjab were at that time facing, to compel the community to close ranks and unite behind a central leadership, the Naraina *mahants* exercised limited authority. By all accounts, Garibdas was meditative and prone to mystical states when playing music, not at all a dynamic leader. One tradition, which was first recorded in the *Bhaktamal* of Raghodas, is that he impressed Emperor Jahangir who had stopped en route back to Agra from Ajmer.[52] Having heard of Garibdas, Jahangir and his retinue came to Naraina only to find that the tank there was dry and could not provide sufficient water for all of them and their horses and pack animals. This meant that they could not stay, so Garibdas played a *raga* appropriate to the rainy season on his *vina* and caused it to rain and the pond to fill.

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[52] Although he sometimes exhibited intolerance of Hindu practices, Emperor Jahangir frequently sought out holy men whom he greatly respected and to whom he offered generous gifts of land, cash and foodstuffs. See, for instance, Bilgrami 1984, 46-47; Jahangir 1968, II: 49-52; 84; 218.

367.

On the seat of Daduji, Garibdas sang.

Passing nearby, the Shah of Delhi came for *darshan*.

It was the time of the hot season, they felt a great thirst for liquids.

The worries of all fled (when) the clouds were made to rain.

They were going from Ajmer to Sambhar, taking along some goods.

Their bodies were fed with the Name of the Lord.

Ragho says, the mind of the invisible was made manifest.

Jahangir took his feet, and Garib's heart was pleased.

368.

When Shah Jahangir was going to Ajmer,

He heard of Garibdas and came for *darshan*.

Wells and the abandoned pond were all dry.

In the season of intense heat, the whole army was thirsty.

(He) sang *rag Malhar* to the clouds and made the *vina* resound.

The thick clouds rained down like the dense clouds

of (the month of) *savan*.

Both joined hands; the Ajmeri gave and the Sambhari took.

Swami did not accept (the offer),

(for) the time did not seem right to him. (BM)

Although Raghodas wrote that Garibdas did not accept an offer from Jahangir, many Dadupanthis insist that a gateway constructed at the entrance to the Naraina compound was built for Garibdas by the Emperor. Others says that the *barahdari* now known as the *haveli* of Garibdas was built by him. Orr mentions the latter tradition and records having seen an inscription to that effect, but there remains no definitive evidence of such a royal gift. What the story does do is to continue the emphasis within the Dadu Panth on the interaction of Dadupanthi *mahants* with kings and emperors, reflecting a contemporary society in which

they were the sources of patronage and legitimation. What is of interest is the fact that all of the early figures such as Dadu, Garibdas and others are described as having refused royal gifts whereas later *mahants* and sadhus, especially after the early eighteenth century, accepted them.

Garibdas is said to have died in 1636 CE and to have been replaced on the *gaddi* of Naraina by his younger brother Maskindas; Maskindas was succeeded in 1648 CE by his son, Faqirdas. Initially, it seems that the position of *mahant* was not necessarily limited to ascetics, just as Dadu had not insisted that his devotees lead either married or celibate lives. Yet there seem to have been disagreements and tensions between the ascetic and householder factions of the panth. While Garibdas remained unmarried throughout his life, Maskindas was married and had three sons. Narayandas (DPP I: 37-43) explains that, after Maskindas' children had been born, he abandoned the life of a householder and became a renunciant, but this explanation may well reflect the later domination of ascetic ideologues. Early traditions also assert that at one point the *gaddi* was jointly held by Dadu's two daughters.[53] Narayandas' account explains that, when Faqirdas died, his aunt Dhyanibai occupied the *gaddi* until someone she considered worthy was appointed, even though many Dadupanthis disapproved of her action. After a short while, Jaitram was selected as *mahant* and she relinquished the position. However, Dhyanibai, a daughter of Dadu, by that time would have been over a hundred years old, and Sundardas' reference to the two sisters in Naraina would have been made much before his death in 1689 CE, suggesting an earlier date for such an occurrence. These are indications that the Dadu Panth was, in its formative years, quite open and unrestricted; and that gradually the male ascetic faction achieved a greater degree of

[53] Although most references to them have been eliminated over the years, there is an apparently authentic verse dedicated to the two sisters composed by *Chhote* Sundardas (1596-1689 CE) in which he says that they succeeded Garibdas on the *gaddi* at Naraina. See Mishra (1992), *Sundar Granthavali*, Vol. 2: 1173-1177.

control and subordinated the opinions of the householders. There are also clear early references to women renunciants (*sadhvis*) who at some point disappeared within Amer but are still found in Dadupanthi lineages that were established in Marwar.[54]

Only in 1693 CE, when Jaitram was selected as mahant, did possession of the *gaddi* in Naraina pass to someone not in the immediate family of Dadu. Jaitram's tenure (1693-1732 CE) marks the period in which the Dadu Panth initially became organized, in the sense of having a strong central leadership that established standards of behavior and belief for the Dadupanthi community.

Up until that time, the sadhus of the community had developed a variety of idiosyncratic approaches to the practice of bhakti. They had come from many different communities and, with no firm guidelines for conduct beyond Dadu's exhortations to focus on the heart, each practiced as he saw fit. A number of them are described in the *Bhaktamal* of Raghodas, which gives an impression of the variety and disparate character of some of the important early disciples.

Dadu's close companion Rajjab (1567-1689 CE), a Pathan who had first come in contact with Dadu at the age of twenty as he passed by him in Amer in his own marriage procession,[55] had gone to his home town of Sanganer where he acquired disciples, many of

[54] The *Gazetteer of Rajputana* (Erskine 1909, 92) says that, in Jodhpur, there is another subdivision of the Dadu Panth called Gharbari. "But," it adds, "as its members marry, they command much less respect than the others, and in Jaipur are not recognized as true Dadupanthis." It must have been predominantly these Gharbaris who were counted in the Marwar census of 1891 (1997) , the first of its kind during the British colonial era, for in Table VI-A it lists a total population of 2,130 male Dadupanthis and 2,008 female Dadupanthis. In Jaipur, women were probably banned from the sect about the same time as Muslims, during the tenure of Jaitram and the reign of Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II. See Chapter 3.

[55] The traditional story is that he was a Pathan, son a soldier in the army of Jaipur. He was in the wedding procession on his way to the home of his intended bride, dressed in the formal garb of a bridegroom. Passing by Dadu's abode, which sat on the main road in Amer, he stopped; upon hearing a couplet from Dadu, he decided immediately to join him as his disciple. Dadu enjoined him never to change, so for the rest of his life (and it was long) he always wore the distinctive dress of a Muslim bridegroom.

them Muslim, and propagated what came to be called the Rajjab Panth, a sect not clearly Dadupanthi and yet not clearly separate, that survived until recent decades. Sen, writing in 1935, said that at that time the sect of Rajjab still did not discriminate between Hindus and Muslims in terms of membership, and that there were monasteries of Rajjab's followers in Sikar, Shekhawati, Khetri and even Narnaul in the Punjab. He added that there were both ascetics and householders who were adherents of the sect, the latter known as "Pandits" (1974, 112-113). Dadupanthis with whom I spoke in Sanganer claimed that the sect is now defunct, although Rajjab and those in his lineage were always considered a part of the Dadu Panth. The unqualified praise heaped upon Rajjab by Raghodas indicates that, in the first half century after Dadu's death, he was perhaps the most highly revered figure within the Dadu Panth.

> 379.
> In the panth of Daduji are *mahants*, *sants* and warriors.
> Astonishing Rajjab is the equal of them all.
> Narad's Prahlad, Ramchandra's Hanuvant,
> Kashyap's son like a rising sun,
> Gorakh's Bharthari, Ramanand's Kabir.
> Pipa's Paras became a dharma-supporting *sant*.
> Ragho says, the naked Datta, disciple of Shankara,
> By whom the Dasnamis became as if limitless.
>
> 380.
> Amazing Rajjab came to the royal city of Amer.
> (At the) guru's words, he forsook marriage and union
> with a woman.
> He had obtained a male body for this service, work,
> and preparation for Prabhu.
> ....
> 383.
> The crown jewel of the Turks is the *Badshah* of Delhi.
> The crown jewel on the head of Hindus is the Rana (of Udaipur).
> The king who rules Amber is the crown jewel of Rajputs.
> The Dadu Panth thinks of Rajjab in this same way.

> Of the eight kinds of mountains, Meru is best of all.
> Of the nine different *nagas*, Shesh remains the best.
> Of the nine gems on a string, silver is best of all.
> The Dadu Panth thinks of Rajjab in this same way. (BM)

Dadu's youngest disciple, *Chhote* Sundardas (1596-1689 CE), who belonged to the Khandelwal merchant caste, had been initiated at the age of five or six. Several years after Dadu's death, at the age of eleven, Dadu's close disciple Jagjivandas, accompanied by Rajjab and other disciples, took him to Benares for study. Sundardas remained in Benares for eighteen years (VS 1664-1682; 1607-1625 CE) studying Vedanta and all of the classical Sanskrit philosophical works (Mishra 1992, I: "Introduction" 24-25). Returning to Rajasthan at the age of twenty-nine or thirty, he spent a decade or more in spiritual practice, wandering here and there, before finally settling in the town of Fatehpur, in Shekhawati, where he remained, receiving patronage from its rulers, the Kayamkhani *nawabs*, former Rajputs who had converted to Islam (Mishra 1991b, 82-83). He was widely recognized as a poet and composed a large body of work, both poetic and philosophical, in Braj Bhasha and Sanskrit, generally avoiding the rougher Rajasthani dialects of most of his contemporaries. His works, many of which remain popular among Dadupanthis, reflect a clear Sanskritizing influence within the Dadu Panth in its early years as the erudite Sundardas tried to correlate Dadu's theology of *nirgun* bhakti with classical Brahminical thought. One of his most best-known compositions is the highly philosophical *Gyan Samudra* ("Ocean of Wisdom"), composed circa 1653 CE (Mishra 1992 I: "Introduction" 51-52, 1-79).

Haridas, the disciple of Prahladdas of Ghatra, roamed the hills east of Amer where he established a lineage of Rajput disciples known as Nagas who maintained many of their Rajput ways. Baba Banvaridas went north to Punjab where his disciples became known as

uttaradhis, the northerners, who seem later to have represented quite a different ideology than that of the Nagas or the *khalsa*, as the sadhus of Naraina became known. The *uttaradhis* were wealthy and represented a powerful independent faction within the panth for much of its existence. Many of Dadu's disciples and their successors wandered beyond the borders of Amer, each expressing *nirgun* bhakti in his own fashion.

515.
Narayan the milk-bearer[56] obtained (the position of)
an important guru in the army.
Raja Jaswant[57] came and sent a train of animals.
He brought oxen whose feed was stolen, (so) how could they go on?
He (Narayan) said, "Make an offering to Niranjan,
who will feed them."
The feed (which was) gone, came (back). All received a big surprise!
(Coming) face to face with Narayan,
the Raja appeared gladdened and his mind was pleased.
The one upon whom the king fixed his gaze was marvelous.
Having become personally acquainted, he announced,
"This is a *sant*!"

517.
In Ratiyaj village in the *jungle desh* (Bikaner) was a *sant*.
Pramanand maintained a compassionate nature (and)
was protective of the truth.
(When) difficult times appeared in the country, when there were
only seven clay pots full of water (remaining to him),
Baba Pramanand handed them over to people and went away
to Malwa.
He came in the month of *asadh*, shortly after the rains.
He was concerned about preventing the destruction of grain.
(He) told (them) to fill clay pots, so they were all
(brought out and) displayed.
He took (them) and pulled his foot (through the water).
All were surprised (that) he bathed (in that way).

[56] A milk carrier would have belonged to a menial caste.
[57] Raja Jaswant Singh I of Jodhpur (1638-1678 CE).

518.

(He) took a coconut and, having shown that it was dry,
he moistened a piece and set it aside.
He drank the water of an *aghori* and abandoned the taste
of the six *rasas*.
Many *riddhis* and *siddhis* come to the disciples in his lineage
in dreams or visions.
(He) explained the highest truths and asked nothing for himself.
The soul is a lotus where the light of wisdom shines.
Brahma is meditated upon there in the lotus of the heart.
Pramanand obtained bliss, and was a guru highly honored
and much garlanded.
Those people who serve the feet of the *sants* are ever fortunate.

519.

Pragdas was an easy-going disciple of Dadu Dindayal.
He had ten disciples who thundered (shouted the message of bhakti)
in the ten directions.
The elder was Ramdas, who ruled a place at Fatehpur.[58]
2. Kesodas. 3. Nirandas. 4. Bohith. 5. Dharmdas.
6. Haridas. 7. Hardas. 8. Paramanand. 9. Tiku Pasa
10. The *tika* was given to Madhodas, all was given to him
in Didwana.
Pragdas was an easy-going disciple of Dadu Dindayal.

520.

Daduji's (disciple) Jagannath received the wealth of Balaram.
He was a shining light in the town of Amer;
King Maha Singh[59] bowed to him.
His devotional songs had an intense energy, they revealed his
yearnings.
(He) defeated the minister Umrao, and remained firmly steadfast.
He constructed an attractive *dham* (which) the eastern disciples
(helped) to build.
Whoever takes refuge at his feet, the task of attaining *siddhis*

[58] The town in Shekhawati district where *Chhote* Sundardas also made his abode.
[59] Maha Singh was the son of Jagat Singh, the oldest son and heir apparent of Raja Man Singh of Amer. As Jagat Singh had died prior to Man Singh, Maha Singh would normally have been enthroned as Raja when the latter died in 1614 CE. However, Emperor Jahangir, ignoring Rajput tradition and asserting his power, confirmed Jagat Singh's younger brother Bhao Singh (1614-1621 CE) as Raja, but also gave a title to Maha Singh. Later, in 1621, Maha Singh's eldest son became Raja Jai Singh I (1621-1667 CE).

will be accomplished.

521.
Makhun was a devotee of Dadu, whose disciple was Benidas.
He experienced *sagun* bhakti,[60] the Name shone in his heart
with endless love.
His birth and karma were formed by good qualities,
(which also) created a dark body.
(He) remained neutral, of neither one party nor the other,
(exercising) discrimination and detachment.
Panth, *sampraday*, and *sant*. He knew them all to be one.
Ragho says that he built a home in the forest
on the banks of the Chambal River, which is another Ganges.
Makhun was a devotee of Dadu, whose disciple was Benidas. (BM)

With such a variety of approaches and understandings of what constituted Dadupanthi identity, Mahant Jaitram is universally credited with bringing some order to the organization of the renunciants of the sect in his attempt to give definition to the practices that would be considered acceptable. It is he who is credited with establishing the Dadu Panth in its present form, though not without resistance. The Naraina *mahants* never seem to have obtained total compliance with their edicts as the Dadu Panth has always produced idiosyncratic sadhus who have pursued their own magical or other practices, and who have formed their own alliances with various royal patrons.

In a yet unpublished paper, Monika Horstmann (Horstmann 1999c) has translated a portion of *Jayatprakash* ("Light on Jait") of the Dadupanthi Jnandas. The portion, which purports to be an accurate representation of the rules instituted by Jaitram, is entitled *Panthapaddhati* ("The Rules of the Panth"). It was published in 1986 CE by Swami Kaniram but, as Horstmann concedes, is problematic in that the Swami discussed neither his

[60] There are occasional references in this and other early accounts of Dadupanthis who practice *sagun* bhakti, so that it was apparently tolerated and not necessarily considered inconsistent with the *nirgun* ideology of the panth.

manuscript sources nor any information on the dating of Jnandas or the text. Nonetheless, in the absence of any other written accounts of the tenure of Mahant Jaitram, it provides a valuable glimpse at the problems plausibly faced by Jaitram and the measures he took to create a more cohesive community of Dadupanthi ascetics.

According to Jnandas' account there were disagreements among different factions during Jaitram's tenure as mahant. Sectarian traditions mention that the Nagas, the lineage of disciples established by *Bare* Sundardas and his companion Prahladdas, refused to go along with Jaitram's dictum that Dadupanthi ascetics should shave their heads. As Rajputs, they insisted upon maintaining distinctive styles of hair and beards as outward symbols of their caste heritage. It is possible, indeed likely, that they had been a source of contention even before that revolt. In Horstmann's translation, Jaitram "did away with doubt and discord by uniting the Panth by a code of honour" (PP 3) by establishing the occupier of the *gaddi* of the Naraina mahant as the supreme arbiter of principles of conduct. Having established himself and his successors as the focal point of honor as well as control, he enumerated the different factions of the panth. The lineage of disciples in Naraina, the *khalsa*, reminiscent of the Sikh Khalsa formed in 1699 CE, is called "the crown on the Panth's head" which is "around the Guru's throne" (PP 37). The *uttaradhi* disciples of Punjab and Haryana are described as supporters of the Naraina mahant (PP 38). There are the *mahants* and sadhus of the 52 *thambhas* who are described as fulfilling their vows (PP 39-40), and the roaming, ash-smeared *viraktas* (PP 42). Finally, there are the Nagas, described as "lords descended from Sundar and Prahlad" and "the prop of the order" (PP 41). Interestingly, the Nagas had earlier been singled out in line 14, where the *thambhas* of Sundardas and Prahladdas are specifically mentioned in contradistinction to the other 52, indicating their relatively late addition to the enumeration of recognized lineages.

According to the *Panthapaddhati*, Jaitram instituted not only a code of respect for his position, but also codes of dress and appearance for sadhus; rituals of investiture for the mahant; rules for celebrating the *chaturmas* and *melas*; rules of succession; and guidelines for ritual exchanges between the guru and disciple, and between the Naraina mahant and the sadhus of the panth. He also established a formal ceremony of initiation, including cutting off the top-knot worn by those of twice-born castes, receiving a *guru mantra*, bathing and receiving a special habit.

Later chapters will discuss the pressure placed upon Jaitram and the Dadu Panth by Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II to conform as well to standards of Vaishnava belief and practice, and the resistance offered to Jaitram's reforms by the Dadupanthi Nagas.

Chapter Two:

Rajasthan, Rajputs and the Kacchwaha Dynasty in Amer

Dadu spent most of his life in what today is the eastern portion of the Indian State of Rajasthan. At that time, the collection of principalities in the region of Rajasthan was culturally homogeneous with the adjacent regions of Gujarat and Sindh, and had had no distinctive collective identity that distinguished it from them. Only later, at the close of the eighteenth century, did they become identified with the unifying force of the ruling caste and referred to as "Rajasthan " or "Rajputana" ("the land/place of the Rajputs"), a term first used in 1800 CE by the European military adventurer George Thomas in his *Military Memoirs* (Maheshwari 1980, 1). The former term was first used in writing to describe this region in 1794 CE in a history entitled *Nasbul Ansab* or *Tarikh-i-Rajasthan*, commissioned by Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh of Jaipur (Khan 1981, 48); however, for the sake of convenience I will use Rajputana and Rajasthan interchangeably to refer to the region.

Although there are, and have been, people who identified themselves as Rajputs throughout northern India, it is only the region known as Rajasthan that has become so closely identified with that widespread community of often disparate clans. The cultural geographer Deryck Lodrick sees that identification of land and people, and the martial image of the Rajput warrior, as having arisen as a result of the relative isolation of the Rajput kingdoms in the desert areas of western India for approximately four hundred years after the defeat of the Rajput King, Prithviraj Chauhan III, by the Islamic forces of Muhammad Ghuri in 1192 CE (Lodrick 1994, 7). The Muslims gained power over the vital region surrounding

Delhi and, in the thirteenth century, began to spread east along the Gangetic plain and south toward Gujarat. Along the way, they defeated and subjugated Rajputs along with the rest of the population, but they were unable to permanently subjugate the Rajput chieftains in the desert areas of Rajasthan, who continued to periodically attack and harass their forces. Lodrick concludes that the during the four centuries of relative isolation the Rajput clans in this region were able to maintain a more tight-knit and "traditional" culture, and that the "popular conception of the Rajput as a chivalrous warrior, defending honor and religion against the Muslim invader in the hills and deserts of Rajasthan, is drawn from this period of history" (ibid., 8).

Until the first affiliation of a Rajput chieftain with the Mughals, when Raja Bharmal (1547-1574 CE) of the princely state of Amer formed an alliance with Emperor Akbar in 1562 CE, there was a sense of many small principalities but not such a strong sense of Rajasthan as a distinct region. That idea of a distinct region was solidified when the Mughals designated much of the area of present-day Rajasthan as a *subah*, the *subah* of Ajmer, in 1594 CE. The conception of the area defined encompassed within the *subah* as a distinct region associated with Rajputs was further strengthened in the nineteenth century when the British redesignated much of it the Rajputana Agency (ibid., 3).

This is the region to which the youthful Dadu is said to have traveled to from Ahmedabad about 1562 CE when he was eighteen years of age. He spent time in solitude and meditation at several places around Sambhar Lake, a large salt lake that provided much of the salt for northern India. First, he visited a remote mountain site near the town of Parbatsar on the western side of the lake, then visited the rugged mountain fastness of Bhairana on the eastern side before settling in the town of Sambhar on the lake's eastern shore.

Today just a dusty town full of horse-drawn *tongas*, Sambhar had been an important

trading center for centuries. Located along principal trade routes between Gujarat and Central Asia, and itself a source of precious salt, it was at one time a wealthy city. From the middle of the eighth century, it had been the capital of the Chauhan Rajputs. Although their capital was later moved to Ajmer, the great leader Prithviraj Chauhan III was still called by the epithet "*Sambhari Rao*" (Erskine 1909, 215). In the thirteenth century, it had come under the control of Muslim rulers who held sway until 1708 CE, when it became part of an enlarged state of Amer under the rulership of Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II. So, when Dadu lived there, it had an influential Muslim community.

Dadu in Amer

With the exception of his journey to Fatehpur Sikri to meet Emperor Akbar, said to have occurred in 1584 CE, Dadu apparently spent his entire life after the age of eighteen living in and wandering about the relatively small region between the cities of Amer and Dausa in the east and the villages and towns surrounding Sambhar Lake in the west. Today one would say that he spent his life almost completely in the Jaipur district of the modern state of Rajasthan, with occasional forays into Jodhpur district; but at that time Sambhar and the nearby town of Naraina, where Dadu spent the last year or so of his life and where his followers established their principal ritual center, were located in a constantly changing border region between the princely states of Jodhpur (at that time known as Marwar) and Jaipur (at that time known as Amber).

Dadu is said to have moved to Naraina at the invitation of Narayandas (d. 1616 CE), the local *thakur* who belonged to the Khangarot branch of the Kacchwaha Rajputs. When the Kacchwaha Raja distributed the land of Amer to his twelve sons in the mid-sixteenth century, the Khangarots (descendants of Rao Khangar) had become lords of the surrounding area and

had made Naraina their headquarters (Manohar 1987, 49-64). Located halfway between Ajmer and Jaipur, about sixty-five kilometers west of the latter, and on the ancient trade route from Agra and Bayana to Nagaur and Multan (O'Brien 1996, 79), it had been for centuries a center of Jainism. Like Sambhar, it is said to have been a famous and wealthy trading center and at one time a capital of the Chauhan Rajput dynasty. Prithviraj III is even said to have begun several campaigns from there (Devra 1993, 154). It, too, initially came under the control of Muslims, specifically the Delhi sultanate, until 1388 CE (Jain 1990, 378), after which it passed from hand to hand for centuries.

Significantly, in the fourteenth century Naraina was the *jagir* of Ransi, a Tanwar Rajput who was the grandfather of the popular Rajasthani deified folk hero, Ramdevra, whose tomb and shrine are located near the town of Pokaran in the Thar Desert north of the city of Jodhpur. In Dominique-Sila Khan's important study of the Nizari Ismaili missionaries in early Rajasthan (Khan 1997, 75-80), Ransi Tanwar (known as Pir Ransi) is shown to have been converted to the Ismaili branch of Islam and to have established his own *gaddi* in Naraina, from where he participated in the Nizari Ismaili *dawa*, or missionary project, converting large numbers of untouchables until his martyr's death. Khan reveals that Naraina and Bichun, a village near the important Dadupanthi shrine at Bhairana,[61] both became important centers of the Ismaili *dawa*, but then the adherents of the sect changed their outward form to one which appeared more "Hindu" when the Nizaris began to fear persecution by the Sunni orthodoxy that prevailed in India. However, Ransi's tomb in

[61] Bhairana is where Dadu and later his first disciple, Sundardas, are supposed to have meditated in a cave. It is also where Dadu's body was taken after his death to be offered to wild animals. Khan (1997, 70) says that Ransi Tanwar is supposed to have met his teacher, Pir Shams, on a mountain near Bichun, which could only be Bhairana.There is no direct evidence of Islamic, especially Ismaili, influences on Dadu's ideology. Yet the fact that Dadu chose these two places to meditate and teach, and that these two important *gaddis* of the Nizaris became important *dhams* of the Dadupanthis, seems hardly coincidental.

Naraina, transformed into an apparently Hindu *mandir* as is the tomb of Ramdevra, is still an important center for the cult of Ramdevra.

In 1562 CE, when Dadu arrived in Rajasthan and Raja Bharmal of Amer met Akbar, there were a number of important Rajput principalities firmly established in the region, chief among them Mewar, Marwar, Jaisalmer, Bikaner and Amer. Yet there were still vast areas of Amer and other Rajput states that were either disputed or under the control of other martial communities such as Jats, Johyas and tribals (Khan 1977, 102 ff). Muslims still ruled such areas as Ajmer, Nagaur, Alwar, and parts of Shekhawati. Amer at that time was quite small and weak compared to other principalities. It consisted of the capital city and *pargana* of Amer,[62] and only two contiguous *parganas* to the south and east (Tod 1995, II: 294). Even as late as 1543 CE, when Emperor Sher Shah, who had defeated the Mughal Emperor Humayun in 1538 and seized control of Delhi, was passing through Kacchwaha territory en route to Ajmer to attack Rao Maldeo of Marwar, the Kacchwahas clearly "were not a power to reckon with" (Sarwani 1974, 680). As an example of their relative weakness at that time, Sarwani cites the fact that the expansionist Rao Maldeo (whose forces had recently occupied both Bikaner and Nagaur) had a fort at Chatsu, only twenty miles from the city of Amer. Between about 1537 and 1540, in an effort to extend his dominion, Maldeo had attacked the chiefs of Chatsu (which he captured), Sambhar, Fatehpur, Udaipurwati, Tonk, Malpura and other small, outlying territories that later, in the eighteenth century, would be incorporated

[62] The town and state are alternatively referred to as Amer or Amber, derived from the name of the tutelary goddess Amba. An even older name for the region incorporated within the state is Dhundar, which still is used at times, as in describing the local dialect of the Rajasthani language, called Jaipuri or Dhundari. Later, after the founding of the new capital city of Sawai Jaipur in 1728 CE, the state gradually came to be known as Jaipur, although the previous names were used as well. Today, the city and district are known as Jaipur, the town is called Amer, and the massive fort on the hill overlooking the town is called the Amber Fort. Colonel Tod, in his *Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han*, wrote that the habit of designating principalities in Rajputana by the names of their capital cities is a practice initiated by the Europeans. Like Tod, "I shall indiscriminately apply the terms (as is the practice of the natives) of Dhoondar, Amber and Jeipoor" (Tod 1995, II: 279).

into Jaipur State (Bhargava 1966, 22).[63]

According to sectarian biographies, Dadu left Sambhar after having gathered a number of disciples around himself and moved to the town of Amer, the capital of the Kacchwaha dynasty, where he remained for fourteen years. At that time, the impressive Amber Fort had not yet been built,[64] but Dadu is believed to have resided in a small park near the lake directly beneath it. That is, the present Dadudwara in Amer, located directly across the main road from the Amber Fort, is said to have been built over the site where Dadu resided and taught during his years in Amer, incorporating his humble shelter into the inner sanctum on its lower level. Later, he would wander from town to town remaining mostly in what today is the Jaipur district before establishing his final *gaddi* (seat) in Naraina.

Rajputs and Rajput Ethos

Rajasthan is popularly perceived as "the land of the Rajputs" precisely because of the image fostered by its Rajput ruling class who nonetheless comprise only about four percent of the population. Yet their influence upon Rajasthani manners has been out of proportion to their numbers.

There has been much discussion over the years of the origins of the Rajputs. Some, such as Colonel Tod, have theorized foreign origins; others have argued that they are surely descended from Aryan Kshatriyas since they "fought so valiantly in defence of the ancestral faith."[65] Recent studies have indicated that at least some groups calling themselves Rajput, following Surajit Sinha's (1962) theory of Rajputization in his seminal article "State

[63] Coincidentally, many of these outlying precincts would become the centers of Dadupanthi Nagas in the early nineteenth century.
[64] Construction began in 1693 CE, during the reign of Raja Man Singh.
[65] Chattopadhyaya (1976,59-60) quotes from C.V. Vaidya's (1924) *Early History of Rajputs (750 to 1000 A.D.*) to this effect.

Formation and Rajput Myth in Tribal Central India," are of tribal origin. The Indian historian K. R. Qanungo has pointed out that in "the middle ages 'Rajput' ordinarily meant a trooper in the service of a chief or a free-lance captain" (1960, 98); and Dirk Kolff (1990), following both Qanungo and D.C. Sircar[66] has surely settled the matter with his argument that many Rajput clans came out of pastoralist bands which achieved some degree of landed status in the first half of the second millennium, forming "largely open status groups of clans, lineages, or even families and individuals some of which were connected to each other by exogamous connubial ties....At first used to denote various individuals who achieved statuses as 'horse-soldier', 'trooper' or 'headman of a village', and then pretended to be connected with the family of some king, it became a generic name for this military and landed class as a whole" (p. 71-72). Kolff is primarily concerned with the folk traditions of the so-called 'spurious' Rajputs of north-central and eastern India, many of whom achieved that status through participation in military exploits, rather than the higher status Rajputs of Rajasthan who, as he expresses, are at one end of the continuum that also includes the peasant and tribal elites at the other end. Yet even in Rajasthan the term 'Rajput' originally had the same indefinite and open connotation; in the sense of *jati* (caste), epigraphic evidence indicates that the term was not used until the fifteenth century, just prior to the Mughal era (Ziegler 1976, 242). Only in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, with the consolidation of more clearly defined states, did the term begin to be applied more specifically to the ruling clans that controlled those territories.

The concern in this dissertation is, therefore, not so much with understanding the origins and social attributes of all groups calling themselves Rajput, but rather with the aristocratic, high-status Rajputs of Rajasthan who embodied the heroic Rajput ideal of the

[66] D.C. Sircar, *The Guhilas of Kishkindhia* (1965).

warrior whose duty is to protect which was enunciated by their bards, the Charans and Bhats. Most of the legitimating genealogies that were produced by the bards for their Rajput patrons were produced only from the sixteenth century on, in response to the Mughal emphasis on genealogy. Rajput Rajas, who began to spend time in the Mughal court after about 1565 CE, realized the politically legitimizing power of royal genealogies, and the traditional literary forms used by their bards "matured only under the influence of the Mughal court and the examples set by the Persian chronicles of this period" (Ziegler 1976, 233). With the construction of ancient, but often spurious, genealogies, the ruling clans such as the Rathores in Marwar and Bikaner, the Sisodiyas in Mewar, and the Kacchwahas in Amer necessarily became closed systems in order to protect their genealogical purity and thus maintain their status. In fact, by becoming bounded clan systems, their status increased. The principal clans in Rajasthan began intermarrying only among themselves, relegating Rajputs from other regions to the status of 'inferior'; even today, the stated ideal among other Rajput clans in India is to "marry west" into the more prestigious families of Rajasthani Rajputs.

The Rajputs of Rajasthan are the exemplars of what John Hitchcock has described as the "martial Rajput," who is differentiated by "the great stress he lays upon his connection" with his illustrious ancestors, "an image of himself as ruler and warrior by birthright and natural endowment," and the sense that it is his duty to protect society and see "that the hierarchical order of society is preserved" (Hitchcock 1959, 11). For these purposes, he places great emphasis on his own innate qualifications to rule and protect society, and upon close links to male members of his lineage who are expected to support him without question in these efforts. Central to his self-image are his own heroism and bravery, ideals that define the ethos and goals of his life as a Kshatriya within the system of *varnashramadharma*, the system in which specific responsibilities devolve upon the members of each of the four

varnas in the classical Hindu paradigm (Thapar 1982). In this paradigm, the goal and the meaning of life (*purushartha*) for the Kshatriya is substantially different than that of the Brahmin. For the Kshatriya/Rajput, "salvation (*gati*, *mukti*) does not follow from the pattern of Brahmanic renunciation, as the theory of the four *asramas* expounds, but from death in the battlefield, defending the people and property, because in this way a Kshatriya conforms to his *purushartha*" (Srivastava 1994, 594).

For the elite Rajputs of Rajasthan this ethos was codified as an ideal by the bards attached to each lineage, so that even from an early age it became internalized. Although the bardic functions of the Charans and Bhats are no longer as prominent, the ethos as recorded and transmitted by Colonel Tod in his *Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han* not only became the idealized picture of Rajputs for Western readers, but remains for contemporary Rajputs a means of access to the heroic, idealized portrait of their ancestral culture as constructed by the bards (Harlan 1992, 4).

On a political level, every Rajput state was ideally coterminus with the land occupied by members of the clan. In other words, the state was comprised of the land claimed (often through conquest) by members of the clan (Banerjee 1962, 110; Stern 1977, 64). In a very real sense, although the importance of clearly defined boundaries of the state developed quite late, in the Rajput conception the "land and lineage *were* the state" (Haynes 1990) in which particular rights and privileges derived from ties of kinship with the ruler and his sub-lineage (Heesterman 1979, 67). Through segmentation, each clan lineage was divided into multiple sub-lineages which occupied particular areas of the state and whose members performed political functions such as protection there (Fox 1971, 37); but particularly after incorporation into the Mughal system, the status of the ruling lineages became elevated so that one lineage, that of the royalty, became identified as superior to others.

In the Rajput political system, rights were subsumed in the land so that control of territory was a source of prestige and power. But, as each son had a claim to the property of the father, the amount of land controlled by each individual member of the clan became reduced over time. In this way, even by the seventeenth century, some Rajputs of the ruling Kacchwaha clan of Amer would have been relatively impoverished if they only relied upon income from their land, a condition that must have made military service of one form or another attractive to them. As economic conditions deteriorated in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the attraction would have been even greater.

Contrary to popular belief, not all who identify themselves as Rajput are necessarily Hindu. Many Rajputs were converted to Jainism prior to the widespread influence of Islam in Rajasthan and still retain a certain pride in their Rajput origins, and find no incompatibility in the expressions of Rajput heroic values and the "concept of martial valor that is central to Jainism" (Babb 1993, 5), although they have largely forsaken Rajput practices. Others converted to Islam while still retaining many Rajput traits. The 1909 *Rajputana Gazetteer for the Western Rajputana States Agency and Bikaner Agency* (Erskine 1909)[67] figured that one-third of the Rajputs in the region of Jaisalmer were converts to Islam who "still retain many of their customs and ideas" (21). Similarly, in Marwar, four percent of the Rajputs were Muslims who "scarcely differ in their customs and manners" from Hindus (85). It was apparently only in the urban areas that these Muslims who were converted from the Rajputs and other castes began to lose something of their traditional ethos, for Erskine further observed that in Marwar the Muslims generally "retain their ancient Hindu customs and ideas, especially outside the large towns, and command the services of Hindu as well as Muhammadan priests; but in towns where they are numerically strong they have begun to

[67] The Western Rajputana States Agency included Marwar and Jaisalmer.

observe certain religious rites in exclusively Islamite fashion" (92). Even in Parbatsar, not far from Sambhar Lake and the Dadupanthi center of Naraina, the most recent census had listed 5991 Rajputs, "including 86 Muslims" (211). In other words, even centuries after their conversion to Islam, these individuals were still identifiable, and may even have identified themselves, as Rajput. How much more likely, then, that Rajput men who became Ramanandi or Dadupanthi Naga sadhus would have retained their "customs and ideas," that is, their Rajput ethos.

That ethos is predicated upon tradition, but tradition in the South Asian context is something that is constructed out of the fluid elements of the present. Tradition, particularly religious tradition,[68] has often been a field of conflict and contest as has been demonstrated in recent scholarship (Oberoi 1994, 1995; Lorenzen 1987a; Pinch 1996b). Traditions of the past are often constructed through myth, hagiography and bardic literature but, as Winand Callewaert has disclosed through his careful study of multiple manuscripts of the same text (Callewaert 1973, 1988), traditions have been constantly revised. Certainly Dadupanthi traditions regarding the origins and life of Dadu were significantly revised during the centuries following his death in order that they might more closely adhere to idealized Vaishnava conceptions of how the founder of an ascetic lineage should appear. Even today, as the Dadu Panth moves more and more toward incorporation into orthodox Vaishnava faith, the traditions as they are expressed in writing and in iconography more and more emphasize his ties with Vedic and Puranic figures, attempting to establish his continuity with an appropriate historic or mythic past.

As will be discussed, the traditions of the Nagas were revised as well, perhaps not so

[68] Here I refer to tradition in the sense of the "invented tradition" delineated by Eric Hobsbawm, including those "actually invented, constructed and formally instituted and those emerging in a less easily traceable manner within a brief and debatable period...." (Hobsbawm 1992, 1).

much in content, but certainly in emphasis. Beginning in the sixteenth century, the constructed Rajput identity had itself been refined by bards, emphasizing values newly acquired from the Mughal example of the significance of an ancient lineage, and of ties to the royal branch of that lineage. Dadupanthi Nagas, dominated by Kacchwaha Rajputs who had internalized this constructed Rajput identity, with its values of protection, valor, and a strong sense of an inherent right to respect, revised their own traditions to emphasize their familial and brotherly ties with the line of Kacchwaha kings of Amer. Even non-Rajput Dadupanthis, living in a milieu in which Rajput political and social values were common currency, sought legitimacy in their focus upon interactions with royal figures, as reflected in the accounts of Dadu meeting Akbar and Garibdas meeting Jahangir. While these are very possibly based on historical events, the rhetoric of legitimation which asserts the greatness of the *sant* in the eyes of the king may be questioned.

It is this ethos that the Rajput disciples in the Dadupanthi lineage of *Bare* Sundardas and Prahladdas cultivated over the years as they remained relatively isolated in the hill tracts of Hindaun and Karoli, and in the town of Amer, and that they brought to bear as they gained economic and material power in the second half of the eighteenth century. It was not just Rajput customs and styles that they maintained and propagated, but also ideas and practices acquired from Sikh, Ramanandi and other Naga[69] ascetics with whom they shared military service. Later chapters will discuss at length the rise of mercenary groups of armed ascetics in the eighteenth century in which the Dadupanthis played a significant role. Chris Bayly (1985, 183) has credited the "all-India military culture" in which these bands of ascetics thrived with

[69] In the eighteenth century, even earlier, armed sadhus became common within many different sectarian communities. They were variously known as *faqirs* (within Muslim ascetic traditions), *sannyasis* or *gosains* (Shaivas), *vairagis* (Vaishnavas, especially Ramanandis), or Nagas (Dadupanthis, Vishnuswamis and others). For British observers, who rarely made fine distinctions between the different groups, the terms were often used interchangeably (Kolff 1971, 214).

fostering the syncretic tendencies that resulted in a syncretic language (Urdu) and culture and, among the Dadupanthis, in adoption of such devotional practices as the worship of the book, creation of *gurudwaras*, and worship of Hanuman. Moreover, Bayly attributes "the emergence of sharper boundaries between Hindu and Muslim religious practice in the period after 1820" (ibid., 184) to the decline of this warrior culture after the imposition of the *pax Britannica* in northern India.

The Rise of the Kacchwahas in Amer

The lives of Dadu and subsequently of many Dadupanthi sadhus were closely intertwined with those of the ruling family of Amer, the Rajput clan of the Kacchwahas. Two Kacchwaha Rajas, Bhagwantdas[70] and Man Singh, are depicted in Dadupanthi literature as having been devoted to him. The nature and the sincerity of their devotion can be questioned, for it was common for Rajput kings to patronize saints and sadhus of all sorts, but it is probable that they did know of him and occasionally even met with him. Even today Amer is not a very large town, and during his fourteen years there Dadu's reputation as a spiritual teacher continued to grow. After Dadu's death, Raja Man Singh's brother, Hari Singh, and son, Shyam Singh, became Dadupanthi ascetics and were instrumental in the establishment of the Naga lineage of sadhus that included many Kacchwahas and individuals from other, related Rajput clans. And, for the next four hundred years, the Dadu Panth was patronized to one degree or another by the rulers of Amer and Jaipur.

According to genealogies composed mostly after the sixteenth century, which were

[70] The son of Bharmal, his name is sometimes spelled Bhagwantdas, Bhagwandas or Bhagwatdas, particularly in older manuscripts written before there was greater uniformity in spelling. Because of this variation, there has been some question as to whether there were two brothers with similar names and, further, which one then was the father of Man Singh. It is not within the scope of this dissertation to go into these questions. I adhere to the belief that there was only one, who is referred to herein as either Bhagwantdas or Bhagwatdas, who was either the father or the adoptive father of Man Singh.

faithfully recorded and popularized by Colonel James Tod in the early nineteenth century in his *Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han*, the Kacchwaha lineage was traced to Kush, the son of King Ramchandra of Ayodhya. According to these genealogies, early scions of the lineage moved west from Ayodhya, eventually ruling in the area of the contemporary city of Gwalior. When the throne was usurped by his uncle upon the death of his father, the infant Dhola Rai was carried west by his mother and eventually, through an extraordinary set of circumstances, was taken in and raised as one of their own by the tribal Minas who ruled Dhuṇdar. Coming of age, about 967 CE he traitorously slew his hosts and established control of Dhundar for his Kacchwaha descendants, who later established themselves through marriages with the Chauhan Rajputs of Ajmer (Tod 1995, II: 280-284).[71] The clan continued to acquire stray villages and small pieces of territory, but even in the middle of the sixteenth century they were only a minor local power without much wealth (Khan 1977, 102), remaining so until their affiliation with the Mughal Empire under Akbar. It was not their first association with Muslim overlords, for even during the period of the Lodi Sultans of Delhi in the fifteenth century, some Kacchwahas had been politically aligned with them (Chandra 1993, 6).

The earliest historical ruler of Amer about whom much is known, and about whom there are more or less contemporaneous accounts, was Prithviraj Kacchwaha (1503-1527 CE). It was during his reign that the Vaishnava renunciant Krishnadas Payahari is said to have come to Dhundar and to have defeated Taranath, a Shaiva Nath yogi, in a contest of occult powers at Galta, a small valley just beyond the eastern gates of the present-day city of

[71] The Indian historian Jadunath Sarkar (1984, 27) rightly refers to this and other stories related by Colonel Tod concerning the early Kacchwahas in Dhundar as "the classic howler" in Tod's understanding of these epic tales of the bards to represent actual history. However, as in all such bardic legends, there is a historical basis in the Kacchwaha displacement of the tribal Minas, who had previously ruled the area.

Jaipur. Having defeated him, he established the Ramanandi *gaddi* at Galta. The story reflects an apparent sudden shift of patronage from Shaivas to Vaishnavas during his reign, a shift which has some historical basis.[72] Prithviraj received extensive praise as a patron of Vaishnavas in the *Bhaktamal* of Nabhadas; and from his time until at least the mid-nineteenth century, when Maharaja Sawai Ram Singh II displayed a marked preference for Shaivism, Vaishnavism remained the chosen religious affiliation of the Maharajas of Amer and Jaipur. They overwhelmingly patronized Vaishnava groups; they constructed Vaishnava temples of Ram, Krishna, Varaha, Narsingh, and Kalki; they worshipped Vaishnava deities, particularly Sri Sitaramji and Govinddevji. This is not to say that the Kacchwaha rulers did not remain to some degree ecumenical; they did patronize the construction of the occasional Surya temple or goddess temple, and even donated funds to the *dargahs* of Muslim saints and funded the construction of mosques. They also occasionally patronized Shaiva *sannyasis*, who seem to have remained a minority in the region. That is, Shaivas are noticeably absent from the history of Amer and Jaipur whereas Vaishnavas and Vaishnavism are intimately entwined with its history.

In 1562 CE, as Akbar was en route by foot from Agra to Ajmer, engaged in a pilgrimage to the *dargah* of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, he met with Raja Bharmal somewhere between Dausa and Sanganer.[73] At that time, Amer was being threatened by the Mughal *jagirdar* of a neighboring territory and was seeking to forestall his aggressions

[72] According to legend, Taranath was later defeated in a similar battle of yogic powers at Pindori, in the Punjab, by a disciple of Krishnadas Payahari named Bhagwanji (Goswamy 1967, 5-6) (Burghart 1978, 121-139). He then established a Ramanandi *gaddi* at Pindori circa 1572 CE (Sinha 1978, 121). Both legends reflect the displacement of Nath yogis by the spreading Ramanandi ascetics.

[73] Traditionally, they are said to have met at Dausa. Nand Kishore Pareek, an authority on Jaipur history, explains that Bharmal had asked his brother Roopsi to get a look at the young Emperor as he passed through Dausa and convey his impressions of him. Receiving a positive report, Bharmal arranged to meet him along the trail just south of Sanganer which Akbar used to take between Agra/Fatehpur Sikri and Ajmer, and where the stone *kos* markers that designated the route are still visible in the fields. According to some historians, however, Bharmal had already met the Emperor five or six years earlier during the first year of his reign (Khan 1977, 103).

through a defensive alliance. They came to an agreement and later the same year, apparently to seal their contract, Akbar was married to Bharmal's daughter in Sambhar. Although other Rajput clans in Rajasthan (particularly the Sisodiyas of Mewar) look down upon the Kacchwahas and consider them inferior for having sullied Rajput honor by offering a Rajput woman to a Muslim, the fact is that in the Rajput political tradition "marriages were often used as the currency of politics, whether between the Rajputs, or between Rajputs and neighboring Muslim rulers" (Chandra 1993, 18). Satish Chandra mentions several such cases which preceded the marriage with Akbar in 1562: Rao Maldeo of Marwar (1531-1562 CE) had married one of his daughters to Sultan Mahmud of Gujarat and another to Islam Shah Sur; and Bharmal had earlier married one of his daughters to Haji Khan Pathan of Alwar (ibid, 17).

Akbar's policy of entering into matrimonial alliances with the Rajputs seems to have been part of a larger policy of entering into political as well as personal relations with them and other local rulers. Certainly, these alliances completely reversed the balance of power among Rajput states so that within a few decades relatively powerless Rajput states such as Amer and Bikaner had become among the most influential. Amer in particular was thus favored, for Bharmal's son and successor, Bhagwantdas, and grandson, Man Singh, became not only trusted military leaders and governors in the Mughal enterprise, but became close friends and allies of Akbar as well. Within a few years Bikaner, Bundi and Jaisalmer had formed similar alliances, although during the reign of Akbar the Kacchwahas "secured the lion's share in the military and administrative responsibilities given to the Hindus" (Khan

1976, 192).[74] Through war booty and the income from *jagirs* throughout the empire,[75] they and other Rajput kingdoms allied with the Mughals began to acquire enormous revenues. With the wealth and power they acquired through imperial service, the Rajas of Amer, Bikaner, Jodhpur and other states were each able to create for themselves a "locally dominant state structure using the Mughal administrative model" (Richards 1993, 179).

The marriage alliances with the Mughals often resulted in direct favors from Emperor Akbar. For instance, when the daughter of Bhagwant Das was married to Akbar's son Salim (who would become Emperor Jahangir) in February 1585 CE, he not only received a dowry of two crore rupees, male and female slaves from as far away as Abyssinia, 100 elephants, and strings of Persian and Arabian horses, but the following month was granted as well a *mansab* of 5000 (Agarwal 1986, 21). Similarly, immediately after the marriage of Salim to Jodha Bai, the daughter of Udai Singh of Marwar, Akbar conferred upon him a *mansab* of 1000 and the title of 'Raja' (ibid, 78-79).

In Amer, the increased wealth combined with the exposure to Persian culture in the Mughal court resulted in a surge in the Kacchwahas' interest and participation in literature and arts such as architecture and painting, as well as a good deal of patronage for religious institutions. For example, the earliest known examples of the Rajput school of painting come

[74] Even among Rajputs, the Kacchwahas held the majority of positions within the *umara*, or nobility, of the Mughal court. Among Kacchwahas, the Rajawats (those belonging to the royal lineage of Bharmal and subsequent Rajas and Maharajas of Amer), vastly outnumbered those from the other eleven houses (*kotaris*) of Kacchwaha nobility. Charts contained in Omkar Nath Upadhyay's study of the Hindu nobility under Akbar and Jahangir (1992, 29-31) demonstrate that, at the time of Emperor Akbar's death in 1605 CE, there were 29,800 Kacchwahas counted among the *umara*, representing almost 70 percent of all Rajputs among them. Of these, almost 85 percent of them were Rajawats. Shekhawats constituted 8.4 percent, while nobles from the other ten houses together comprised less than 7 percent of the Kacchwaha nobles. By 1627 CE, the Kacchwaha numbers had dropped to 9500 (or 10.6 percent of all Rajputs among the *umara*), of whom 100 percent belonged to the Rajawat sub-lineage.

[75] Zaidi (1997, 21) points out that Akbar deliberately created *jagirs* for the Rajputs far from their home territories, realizing that such a policy "would compel a merger of the chiefs' own interests with those of the empire."

from a garden house in Bairat believed to have been built for Man Singh in 1587 CE (Goetz 1978, 76). Later, Raja Man Singh (1590-1614 CE) patronized numerous architectural projects, including the Amber Fort, the Jagat Shiromani Temple in Amer, the Harideva Temple at Govardhan, and five temples at Vrindavan (Burton-Page 1996, 123). Further, while serving as a Mughal administrator in other regions of the empire, he patronized construction of a temple and palace in Varanasi, and the Temple of Patana Devi in Patna; and he sponsored the restoration and reconsecration of the Jagannath Temple in Puri (Asher 1996, 219). Catherine Asher argues that these structures, many constructed in red sandstone in the style of Akbar's constructions at Fatehpur Sikri, were meant to be viewed as both "symbols of Mughal authority" that "spread a uniform Mughal aesthetic," and as symbols of the newly acquired Kacchwaha prestige (ibid., 215-216).

In addition to architecture and painting, there was a tremendous flowering of literature in Amer in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. Man Singh's younger brother Prithviraj Kacchwaha became a great favorite of Akbar for his poetic talents as did Manohar Das 'Tausani', another Kacchwaha, to whom Akbar personally taught Persian and who became the first non-Muslim Persian poet of India (Khan 1981, 44). It was not just Persian literature that was adopted. Persian became the court language of Amer, Persian rituals of state were adopted in the court, and the government was reorganized according to the Mughal pattern. This extensive exposure to all facets of Mughal culture had an enriching effect upon the Kacchwaha nobility of Amer in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries so that an appreciation of art and literature became important aspects of their culture. The same period saw the beginnings of a great literary output in the vernacular from the *rasik* Ramanandis in Rewasa and the Dadupanthis throughout Amer. The fact that there were such dramatic cultural changes taking place at the same time within the same small territory can

hardly be considered a matter of coincidence, although, to my knowledge, no scholars have studied either the relatedness of these highly localized events or their possible causes. In fact, there has been little if any comment upon the virtual explosion of literary and artistic activity in Amer during this period that included both secular and religious communities, both containing large contingents of local Rajputs.

It was not just a few chiefs and nobles of Amer and other Rajput states who attended the Mughal court and served in the Mughal army. It became a path to wealth and honor for many of their lesser relations and, especially after the enthronement of Jahangir as Emperor, large numbers of "ordinary" Kacchwahas served in the Mughal army (Zaidi 1980), both contributing to and partaking of the composite culture that was gradually developing in the Mughal camps, a culture that would lead ultimately to the development of a syncretic military culture and the composite "camp" language of Urdu, also known as Hindustani.

Another benefit of alliance with the Mughals was that, from the time of Akbar, there was no attempt by the Emperor or his administration to meddle in internal affairs of the loyal Rajput states, with the exception of succession disputes, as long as they provided no threat to Mughal hegemony. Even the Rajas themselves devoted little energy to internal affairs, since they spent in some cases most of their adult lives away from their own territory. The result, certainly in Amer, was that there was little pressure on new religious formulations such as that established by the devotees of Dadu to conform to given standards of religious behavior. There was no political turmoil and no war to contend with, for the wars were always fought somewhere else; and succession, supervised by the Mughal Emperors, was for the most part orderly. In addition, there is substantial evidence that cultivation was greatly expanded in eastern Rajasthan and that the rural economy throughout the Mughal Empire was flourishing in the seventeenth century (Richards 1990, 631-633), bringing greater income and

economic stability to the rural populace upon whom many religious mendicants depended for support. For religious communities in Amer in the late sixteenth and most of the seventeenth century, there was relatively more freedom to experiment and to express their spirituality, a good deal of patronage, and not much need for a high degree of organization.

Although the greater religious conservatism of Jahangir (1605-1627 CE) and his successor Shah Jahan (1627-1658 CE) had repercussions in other areas of North India, Amer remained relatively untouched until the accession of Aurangzeb in 1658. Despite Aurangzeb's reputation as a fundamentalist iconoclast, perhaps even a fanatic, historians generally agree that he restrained himself from overtly pursuing such a path at least until after the death of Mirza Raja Jai Singh I of Amer in 1667, and that of Maharaja Jaswant Singh I of Marwar in 1678. Both had been stalwarts of the Empire for decades. It was only after the former's death that he issued an edict in April, 1669 calling for the destruction of Hindu temples (Nath 1996, 163), an edict that was not at all applied universally, but rather sparingly and often with some political or symbolic motive. Even then, although Aurangzeb's representatives intermittently harassed Hindus by razing temples, and imposing *jiziya* and other discriminatory taxes throughout the empire, Amer remained relatively untouched.

In general, during the reign of Aurangzeb (1658-1707 CE) Rajputs and other Hindus found themselves shut out of important positions and suffered a consequent loss of influence within the Mughal administration. Goetz theorizes, though, that after the so-called "Rajput rebellion" against the Mughals by Mewar and Marwar in response to the Mughal occupation of Jodhpur following the death of Maharaja Jaswant Singh I, Aurangzeb was compelled to revise his policy toward the Rajputs. With Marathas threatening stability in the south, and the Rajputs, Jats and Sikhs causing disorder in the north, he had to enlist the cooperation of those Rajput states which had remained loyal to the Mughals to help suppress the civil

unrest. But for this purpose, he needed to make tacit concessions, particularly regarding interference in the religious affairs of those states (Goetz 1978, 48). Those states were Amer, Bundi and Bikaner, all of which flourished between 1680 and Aurangzeb's death in 1707.

The characteristic relationship between the Emperor and the Maharajas of Amer is revealed by an examination of some of the *vakil* reports sent by the Amer *vakil* (lawyer) at court to the Maharaja. Often these reports would let the local ruler know what was occurring at court, particularly as it pertained to him and his state. For instance, report number 189 in Volume II of *A Descriptive List of the Vakil Reports Addressed to the Rulers of Jaipur* (1972) issued by the Rajasthan State Archives is a letter from Udai Ram to Maharaja Bishan Singh (1688-1699 CE) in 1689 informing him that Emperor Aurangzeb was pleased to know that he had donated money for the construction of a mosque in Mathura. And report number 217 is a letter from *vakil* Kesho Rai to Bishan Singh in 1690 saying that there was a report that the Maharaja had taken out a Gangaur[76] procession with drums and fanfare, but that the writer had blocked the report from reaching the ears of the Emperor. What do these two short missives reveal about the relationship? They indicate that Bishan Singh, and the Maharajas of Amer both before and after him, were able to do more or less as they liked within their own territories, as long as they were not too ostentatious or apparent in the practice of their religion, and as long as they paid lip service to Islamic institutions.

Only two or three temples are known to have been destroyed in or around Amer during the reign of Aurangzeb. In Richard Eaton's essay on temple desecration in India, he lists only one temple at Khandela near Sikar, about 100 kilometers northeast of Jaipur, attacked in 1679;[77] and there was one temple in Sambhar that was attacked in 1697-98 (2000,

[76] A local form of the goddess Parvati, whose image is taken out and paraded through the streets of Jaipur with great pomp during the annual spring festival of Gangaur.

[77] The important Rajput temple of Khatu Shyamji, located about 25 kilometers south of Khandela, may have been desecrated at the same time. See Chapter Six .

131).[78] In Mathura and Vrindavan, however, where the temples were much more exposed to possible attack, there was an atmosphere of fear due to concerns about Muslim depredations. Several important deities, icons of Krishna, were removed from temples there and taken for safety to areas of Rajasthan where it was believed they would be more protected. Among those resituated, accompanied by the hereditary *pujaris*, were the images of Sri Nathji, Madanmohan and Govinddevji. Sri Nathji was removed from its Vallabhite temple in Govardhan and taken first to Marwar, then later established in Mewar in 1672 in the town now known as Nathdwara (Sharma 1988, 133-134). Madanmohan was relocated to Karauli, in the hilly tracts east of Amer. The image of Govinddevji and his consort Radha was removed from the Govinddevji Temple in Vrindavan in 1670. Apparently under the protection of Maharaja Ram Singh I (1667-1688 CE) of Amer and his successors, it was taken on a circuitous route and kept in several places before finally arriving near Amer about 1700 CE (Nath 1996).

The Kacchwahas had already had a prolonged relationship with Govinddevji. The image, discovered by the Chaitanyite Rup Goswami, had first been installed in a temple circa 1535 CE. In 1565, it received the first of many revenue grants from Akbar, specifically issued at the behest of Raja Bharmal of Amer. In 1590, a new temple was constructed by Raja Man Singh; and from 1633 on, the custodians were formally appointed by the Maharajas of Amer. Eventually, in 1713, a new temple was built for Govinddevji by Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II at Kanak Vrindavan on the shore of a lake near Amer; later, it was placed in a newly constructed temple adjacent to the City Palace in the city of Sawai Jaipur where it became the *ishta devata* of Sawai Jai Singh and where it remains to this day (Horstmann 1999a, 1-20).[79]

[78] Sri Ram Sharma (1988, 136) writes that one imperial agent, Abu Talab, reported to the Emperor in 1680 that, as the Emperor had requested, he had destroyed as many as sixty-six temples in Amer, a number which appears greatly inflated.

[79] See next chapter for further discussion of Govinddevji in relation to Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II.

As part of his campaign of puritan orthodoxy, Aurangzeb had dismissed all dancers, musicians and artists from the imperial court in 1688 CE. Looking for royal patronage, large numbers of musicians and artists had flocked to the religious and artistic havens of Amer, Bundi, and Bikaner where there was a sudden burst in the arts and literature in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century (Erdman 1978, 357). During this period of warfare and strife in many parts of the Mughal Empire, then, Amer was a protected region, relatively unaffected by threats of war, where there was a tolerance for artistic and religious expression of all kinds. As a result, it was a period of experimentation and development by artists, writers, scholars, and religious practitioners.

This period of stability was followed by a relatively short period of instability following the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 CE and the subsequent war of succession. As a protege of Aurangzeb's grandson Bidar Bakht, Sawai Jai Singh II (1699-1743 CE) had initially sided with his father, Prince Azam Shah (Sarkar 1984, 159); Jai Singh's younger brother Bijay Singh, however, had supported Prince Shah Alam. When the latter was successful, and had been enthroned as Emperor Bahadur Shah, he marched on Amer in late 1707, replaced Jai Singh on the throne with his younger brother, and reduced Jai Singh's rank in the Mughal army. Feeling slighted, Jai Singh organized resistance to Muslim power in Rajasthan and defeated the Mughal army in a battle near Sambhar, only a few miles from the Dadupanthi center of Naraina. With concerns in other regions of the Empire, Bahadur Shah offered to restore Jai Singh's rank, but the latter insisted upon restoration of the throne and removal of Mughal troops from Amer. With growing dissension throughout the empire, Bahadur Shah "bowed to necessity" and restored the throne to Sawai Jai Singh II in June, 1710 CE (Sharma 1969, 136-138). Still, Sawai Jai Singh's position remained tenuous until the death of Bahadur Shah in 1712. He spent much of the next seven years in the Mughal court

protecting his interests and those of Amer while a succession of six different individuals were enthroned as Emperor, subsequently dethroned and often murdered by scheming courtiers. He and other Rajput leaders such as Maharaja Ajit Singh of Jodhpur were motivated by self-interest, but had no intention of establishing their independence from the Mughal Empire. Though at times recalcitrant in his loyalty, Sawai Jai Singh faithfully served the Mughals in a variety of military and administrative positions throughout the remainder of his life (Bhattacharya 1993, 59).

With the enthronement of Mühammad Shah as Emperor in 1720, Sawai Jai Singh approached the apex of his power and began planning his new capital city of Sawai Jaipur, founded in 1727 CE, which would be the first planned city in India. His idea was to create a new and significant religious and cultural center. To that end, he invited artists, musicians, scholars, pandits, merchants and others to move to the new city and contribute to its development (Erdman 1978, 357). He had very fixed ideas of what constituted true Vaishnava religion and through conferences and edicts set about reforming what he viewed as excesses fostered by the loosely organized, innovative new communities propagating popular devotionalism (bhakti).[80] An ardent scholar of the *shastras* and Vedas, he wanted to revive the classical Hindu religion of the past (Bhatnagar 1974, 337); to that end, he not only tried to compel local and regional sectarians to adhere to established standards of Vaishnava orthodoxy, but he also resurrected ancient Vedic sacrifices such as the *asvamedha*.[81]

The protected nature of Jaipur State was first seriously threatened in 1734 CE. As the Mughal *subedar* of the province of Malwa, a position to which he had been appointed in

[80] See Chapter 3.

[81] Traditionally, the *asvamedha* (horse sacrifice) "by which the monarch ratified his claim to suzerainty over his neighbors, was only performed by those rulers whose strength, power and wealth justified such an ambitious undertaking. The benefits of the sacrifice were extension of empire, general increase of strength, undisputed power, success in new enterprises..." (Gonda 1966, 110).

1730 and again in 1732-1737, Sawai Jai Singh had been fighting Maratha incursions into that region (Sinh 1936, 222). With the decline in Mughal authority in the Deccan, the Marathas had begun expanding north in search of revenues and booty but had until then shown no interest in Rajasthan. In April 1734, the Maratha chieftains Malhar Rao Holkar and Ranoji Scindia stormed the neighboring state of Bundi, replacing Sawai Jai Singh's son-in-law and hand-picked candidate for the throne with his brother, Budh Singh, who had hired them for that purpose. Alarmed, Sawai Jai Singh convened a conference of the leading rulers of Rajasthan at Hurda, centrally located in northern Mewar, in July, 1734 (Tikkiwal 1974, 79-80) (Sinh 1936, 227-228). The purpose was to plan ways to jointly defend against further Maratha incursions into Rajasthan and, although an agreement to that effect was signed, nothing ever came of it. Coincidentally, or perhaps relatedly, in August, 1734 Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II celebrated his first of two *asvamedhas* (Bahura 1979, 141), and in the same year a conference of the four Vaishnava communities was convened at Brahmapuri, on the outskirts of Jaipur, for the purpose of organizing Vaishnava sadhus into armed parties known as *jama'ats*, ostensibly for protection from similarly armed parties of Shaiva sadhus.[82]

As Budh Singh had done in Bundi, so too did Madho Singh in 1743 CE when his older brother Ishwari Singh was enthroned as Maharaja of Jaipur after the death of Sawai Jai Singh. Seeking mercenary Maratha aid to obtain the throne, he succeeded in 1750 CE when, faced by an overwhelming Maratha army at the gates of Jaipur, Ishwari Singh committed suicide. For the Marathas, it was but another step in their efforts to control all of Rajasthan and extract revenues from its rulers. It reflected a growing disorder that would characterize the remainder of the eighteenth century in North India, and particularly in Rajasthan. Andre Wink has summarized these developments and their implications aptly:

[82] See later chapters for a detailed discussion of the organization of the *jama'ats*.

> The invasion of Nādir Shah in 1739 and the concomitant collapse of Mughal authority in Rajasthan, the acquisition of the 'deputy-governorship' of Malwa by the successor of Baji Rao in 1741, then the death of Jai Singh in 1743 which was followed by the deaths of other imperial Rajputs....the continuing succession disputes--all this allowed the Marathas to intensify their hold on the province and increase their demands for tribute. Now they also took to demanding succession fees or *nazars* expressive of their claim to a form of suzerainty over the Rajput states (Wink 1986, 141).

The Mughal government in Delhi, which had been attacked and looted at least nine times between 1739 and 1761 by Persians, Marathas, Jats, Afghans, and dissident Mughal officials, no longer was able to exercise control (Dwivedi 1989, 132). Earlier, due to Maratha depredations in Malwa and the lack of sufficient Mughal protection along the roads, the principal trade route from Agra to Gujarat had shifted so that it passed through Jaipur, lending it greater economic and strategic importance. After the invasion of India by Nadir Shah in 1739, due to a similar situation in the northwest, the trade route from Lahore shifted south through Multan and Jaipur (Roy 1978, 61-62). Also, in the second half of the eighteenth century, traders from neighboring regions such as Gujarat, Sindh, Multan, Punjab, Agra and Delhi were actively encouraged to move to Jaipur and other major states in Rajasthan through the offer of concessions such as tax exemptions, grants of free land, government assistance in collecting debts, and compensation for loss through robbery (Gupta 1987). Thus, in addition to being a haven for artists, musicians and Vaishnava sectarians, Jaipur became a haven for merchants, traders, moneylenders and jewelers who brought to it a great deal of wealth.

Caught between the demands for revenue of the Mughals and the increasingly threatening demands for revenue from the Marathas, Jaipur and the other Rajput states began

to suffer a decline. Traditional alliances began to falter, and new political alliances were extremely fragile, with a desire for quick revenue the overriding concern of all. Alarmed by Maratha demands for payment, Maharaja Sawai Madho Singh formed a short-lived defensive, anti-Maratha alliance in 1755 CE with Shuja-ud-daula, the Nawab of Awadh (Tikkiwal 1974, 125).

With the decline of Mughal authority there was throughout north India a rise in regional and local elites whose political systems relied more and more upon revenue contracting and mercenary soldiery rather than control of the land and the raising of forces from among the local landlords (Barnett 1980). In Awadh, mercenary Shaiva *sannyasis* had become an integral part of the army of Shuja-ud-daula. After losing the Battle of Panipat in 1761,[83] the Maratha chiefs began to rely more and more on mercenaries because fewer Marathas were willing to accompany them on their annual raids into the north (Gordon 1994, 19-20). The Jat Maharaja Jawahar Singh (1764-1768 CE) employed *sannyasi*, Sikh, Dadupanthi Naga and other mercenaries in various battles. Other states, including the Rajput states of Rajasthan, followed suit in order to compete militarily, with the result that the overall demand for cash among all of these administrations kept increasing.

Sawai Madho Singh I was succeeded in 1768 CE by his infant son, Prithvi Singh. In many of the Rajput states minors were being enthroned and there resulted an unusual degree of competition for the thrones. Stewart Gordon has discussed the "weak candidate theory" of Indian politics which applies perfectly to the Rajput states in the second half of the

[83] On a larger, pan-Indian scale, the defeat of the Marathas at Panipat (1761) and the British victory at Plassey (1757) are seen by some historians as events which bifurcate the eighteenth century, marking the end of indigenous aspirations of empire and the beginning of the British era which was marked until at least 1800 CE by anarchy, social deterioration and warfare. Others see the sack of Delhi by Nadir Shah (1739), which effectively ended Mughal domination in India, as demarcating a qualitative shift in eighteenth-century Indian political and social life (Ali 1986/7).

eighteenth century.[84] Because of weak rules of succession that recognized primogeniture in theory, but were based upon the principle that no one individual necessarily has exclusive right to the throne because he only serves at the pleasure of the clan nobility, a weak candidate for the throne would seek support from an external power.[85] The external power, primarily the Marathas in the case of Rajasthan in the eighteenth century, would offer support in return for promises of revenues which it could then extract from the territory. This lack of clear primacy among different lineages of one clan was an inherent source of tension in Rajput polity that had been largely subdued during the period of Mughal hegemony when one 'royal' lineage was legitimized by the external power of the empire. As Mughal power and influence declined, these tensions reemerged explosively and continued to dominate politics in Rajasthan until they became stabilized through the regulatory influence of another external power, the British paramountcy (Haynes 1978, 420-421).

Maharaja Sawai Madho Singh had made repeated attempts to form coalitions to resist the Marathas. Besides the short-lived alliance with Awadh, he had tried to organize Marwar and Mewar in such an effort, but political infighting doomed those attempts. Between 1756 and 1761, he had repeatedly invited Ahmad Shah Abdali of Kabul to invade northern India in order to drive out the Marathas. When Abdali (also known as Durrani) did invade in July 1761, Sawai Madho Singh, who remained aloof from the Battle of Panipat in which the Marathas were (temporarily) defeated, received warm greetings from him on the eve of the battle (Tikkiwal 1974, 131).[86]

In 1787 Jodhpur and Jaipur again tried to organize resistance to the Marathas. The

[84] Lecture, University of Wisconsin-Madison, April 17, 1999.
[85] For a discussion of the rule and instances of exceptions when it was not applied during the Mughal period, see Inayat Ali Zaidi's (1978) "Customs and Practices Regulating Succession among Rajput Ruling Class in the Mughal Service."
[86] This is but one more example of the fact that the wars of the second half of the eighteenth century had nothing to do with religion or ethnicity.

diwan of Jaipur was sent to Lucknow to try to hire an English brigade for the purpose. That plan failed, due to the then-current English policy of non-interference, but they did manage to organize their own forces which contained many mercenaries, including Dadupanthi Nagas, to drive back the Marathas in the Battle of Lalsot later that same year (Gupta 1971, 119-121). Again in 1789, Maharaja Vijay Singh of Jodhpur suggested to Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh of Jaipur that they contact Timur Shah of Kabul to ask him to come oppose the Marathas, a request that was apparently refused by the Shah (Acharya 1978, 335).

The constant warfare began to take a toll on the land and citizenry of Rajasthan, including those of Jaipur, although Roy (1978, 63) suggests that the city of Jaipur itself and the immediately surrounding areas remained quite prosperous until the very end of the eighteenth century, with the construction of the Hawa Mahal in 1799 CE (the last significant building constructed in Jaipur until the 1860s) marking the end of that period. Others have depicted it as more chaotic; certainly the outlying areas had been suffering for decades. The historian G. N. Sharma (1968, 342-346) describes a period characterized by the destruction of fields and towns, thousands of men killed and wounded in battle, and an impoverishment of the land, especially in Shekhawati and other outlying territories, that caused people to leave in search of employment and sustenance. Others see the period of 1750 to 1800 CE as a "grim story of growing anarchy" and a period of growing economic crisis that "affected almost all sections of society" (Singh 1990, 12). Dilbagh Singh cites a letter from the Jaipur court to its *amils* in 1760 CE lamenting the depopulation of the villages and the "miserable condition" of the peasant farmers as well as the (mostly Rajput) *jagirdars* (ibid.). He further notes evidence of frequent years of famine and drought in Jaipur and northern Rajasthan: 1755, 1757-1758, 1760-1763, 1765, 1770.

In his essay "Recovery from Adversity in Eighteenth Century India," Stewart

Gordon (1994, 99 ff) postulates that during periods of adversity such as drought, war, and famine villagers typically joined the army as a means of survival. In Jaipur during this period, when war and the other factors began to cause depopulation of the villages and farmlands of the interior of Jaipur State, many men who had been thus displaced from the village economy and agricultural pursuits must have joined the regional armies, but many others (including impoverished Rajputs) joined the large mercenary bands of armed sadhus of various sectarian affiliations that were active in and around Jaipur: Dadupanthi, Ramanandi, Vishnuswami, Nimbark and others. Gordon has further noted that, in eighteenth-century armies, there were few barriers to military service since there were "Muslims serving in Maratha and Rajput states, Marathas and Jats serving in Muslim armies, Marathas serving in Rajput states, and so on" (ibid., 79). He also notes that groups with a tradition of literacy, such as the Dadupanthi Nagas would have been, often found employment in the important occupation of tax collection.

With the anarchic situation that existed in Jaipur after the death of Sawai Madho Singh I in 1768 CE, many of the tributary landlords of Jaipur rebelled and either refused to pay taxes or, as in the case of Rao Raja Pratap Singh of Alwar, declared their independence. During the ensuing few decades, Jaipur lost much of the territory it had gained during the early reign of Sawai Jai Singh II. Many of the Kacchwaha clansmen of Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh (1778-1803 CE), disgusted by his "unkingly vices" and his reliance upon advisors viewed as unfit, kept away from the capital city for the first ten years of his reign. Others, such as the Shekhawats, seized lands belonging to the state (Bhattacharya 1972, 11). Even earlier, to dilute the authority of the clan nobility and reduce their own reliance upon them, some of the Rajas had begun introducing a "service nobility consisting of Rajputs who did not belong to the ruling clan and served as a counter-weight" to the pressures of their own landed

nobility (Richards 1993, 179). Later they imported 'foreign stock', who would be more dependent upon them and thus more loyal, in the form of mercenary Purbia Rajputs from Bihar, Sindhis, Rohillas and Pathans (Bhattacharya 1972, 13). In the 1760s, many of them began hiring the mercenary bands of armed sadhus and other mercenary and marauding groups that had begun to proliferate in mid-century. In Stewart Gordon's opinion, this situation was related to the "general process of state formation in Central India in the eighteenth century" which required "maximum stable land revenue, not land as such," in order to meet the "short-term need of paying troops." (Gordon 1994, 16). Indeed, for many men who wanted to escape harsh conditions in the villages, the only available choice was to either join an army or to become affiliated with one of the mercenary groups (ibid., 17).

One of those armed religious groups, the Dadupanthi Nagas,[87] were formally organized into *akharas* in 1755 CE, and initially were employed by other states; but, after 1769, they began to work more and more for Jaipur. In 1797, the armed Dadupanthi Nagas became a permanent fixture in the regular army of Jaipur after having been employed as mercenaries for almost thirty years. They continued to engage in battles with the Marathas and neighboring states such as Jodhpur; however, especially after a treaty of defensive alliance was signed with the British in 1818 CE, their principal work involved collecting taxes from recalcitrant *zamindars* and *thakurs* in outlying areas of Jaipur territory. Thousands continued to be employed in the army of Jaipur until 1938 CE, when they were disbanded in the process of the modernization of Jaipur's administration.

By 1820 CE, the British had formed defensive alliances with all of the major Rajput states except Dungarpur, and were able to enforce an era of peaceful external relations among them. Still, Jaipur continued to suffer severe economic hardship until at least 1835 (Roy

[87] The relations between the Dadupanthi Nagas and Jaipur State will be further elucidated in later chapters.

1978, 63). It was not until the end of the nineteenth century, during the reign of Maharaja Sawai Madho Singh II (1880-1922 CE), that Jaipur began to make an economic comeback and, under British influence, began the process of modernization which culminated in the incorporation of Jaipur into the Indian State of Rajasthan after Independence.

Chapter Three

The Career and Influence of Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II

It is not merely a matter of coincidence that the formative period of the Dadu Panth under the leadership of Mahant Jaitram (1693-1732 CE) was approximately synchronous with the reign of Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II (1700-1743 CE) as Maharaja of Amer and Jaipur. He is recognized as one of the most accomplished figures of his age, an individual who greatly influenced the religious, political, social, intellectual and artistic trends of the time. The early eighteenth century was a period characterized not only by momentous political upheavals and realignments, but by concomitantly significant religious organization and sectarian realignment as well. This was particularly true in Amer and in the two Hindu religious centers of Vrindaban and Mathura, located near each other in the region known as Braj. The occurrences in the latter two towns were, at least initially, clearly related as much to the persecution--or, more properly, threats of it--promulgated by the Mughal administration of the Emperor Aurangzeb as to the increasing popularity of the type of bhakti worship typified by the Gaudiya Sampraday, which had become established in the region in the sixteenth century. Religious change in both regions was significantly affected by the intervention of Sawai Jai Singh II, who increasingly adhered to a traditional concept of the king as the ultimate arbiter in all things religious.

As a youth, Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II of Amer had received training in the *shastras* and had been imbued with traditional Vedic concepts of kingship. Once he had achieved a position of supreme temporal political authority through the expansion of his hereditary

territories and the solidification of his influence at the Mughal court, he exercised the religious and moral authority inherent in his position to redress Mughal discriminatory policies toward Hindus and to revive traditional Vedic rites, culminating in the *asvamedha* of 1734. His authority was further exercised in an attempt to codify the practices of the diverse bhakti communities that had arisen in the territories he controlled between Jaipur and Mathura.

Many of these communities were in their formative stages, not yet having coalesced into distinct *paramparas*, while some had already developed distinctive traditions of their own. Older sects among the *catuh sampraday* (the four traditional communities of Vaishnavas) were even beginning to experience marked diversities of opinion that would eventually lead to schisms. By exercising his influence through a series of conferences and edicts between approximately 1718 and 1736, he caused some of the new, loosely amalgamated communities such as the Dadupanthis, Haridasis and Ramanandis to nominally accept and identify themselves with a common Vaishnava identity, one associated with the Gaudiya teachings of Jiva Goswami and based upon his (i.e., the Maharaja's) interpretations of Vedic and Puranic traditions. Other communities, also including the Dadupanthis, were compelled to forswear practices considered to be antithetical to this common Vaishnava identity.

Through his prolific correspondence with pandits and religious philosophers, Sawai Jai Singh was able to develop a consensus among them as to what constituted an acceptable Vaishnava ethos, an ethos that became increasingly widespread as the diversity of religious movements which characterized the seventeenth century constructed identities for themselves as distinct traditions and communities of believers nominally affiliated with the four traditional Vaishnava *paramparas*, creating the appearance of the unification of Vaishnavas within one overarching, reputedly unchanging "Hindu" religious tradition.

There were as well unintended outcomes of certain of his policies. For instance, his firm opposition to sadhus being trained in the use of arms very likely resulted in the ultimate shift of large numbers of armed *vairagis* from Jaipur to Ayodhya, lending greater importance to the latter as the present-day seat of Ramanandi power. Though some of the changes effected by the religious policies of Sawai Jai Singh II were short-lived and of only local importance, his attempts to compel neo-bhakti communities to identify themselves with the much older traditions of the *catuh sampraday* and, through them, with the traditions of the Vedas and Puranas (particularly as enunciated in the *shastras*), was largely successful and had a decisive influence on subsequent perceptions of Vaishnava and Hindu self-identity in regions of North India. In brief, Jai Singh was not only a remarkable scholar and political leader, but also a visionary social and religious reformer who had a profound effect upon subsequent events in the history of Vaishnava faith and in that of the Dadu Panth. To understand the developments, it is necessary to know more of the life and times of Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II.

The rise of Jaipur under Sawai Jai Singh II

Born to Raja Bishan Singh in 1688, the same year his then sixteen-year-old father was recognized as Raja of Amer and appointed *faujdar* of Mathura, Jai Singh was the namesake of his great-grandfather, Mirza Raja Jai Singh I (Sharma 1969, 128-129) (Roy 1978, 1). By all accounts, he was a precocious youth as illustrated by the apocryphal story of his so impressing Aurangzeb upon their first meeting in 1696 that the latter conferred the title "Sawai" upon him, declaring him to be one and one-quarter (*sawa*) the man his namesake had been (ibid.).[88]

[88] While the appellation may well have been initiated by Aurangzeb, as the legend has it, the title itself was not formally conferred upon Jai Singh until Emperor Farrukhsiyar did so in July, 1713.

The young prince received the traditional education for one of his station: training in arms, language, philosophy and the arts. In January 1700, at the age of eleven, he ascended the throne of Amer after the untimely death of his father. Compelled to serve in the Mughal army, he became a favorite and a protege of Aurangzeb's grandson, Bidar Bakht, to whose command he was for several years assigned. On several occasions Bidar Bakht tried to see that the youthful Raja was advanced beyond his relatively lowly rank of 2000, but such efforts were consistently thwarted by Aurangzeb himself, who by that time had apparently hardened his heart against the Rajputs (Sarkar 1984, 159-160).

In the contest for the Mughal throne after the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, Jai Singh joined Bidar Bakht, whose army was near at hand and to whom he no doubt felt indebted, in supporting the claim of the latter's father, Azam Shah. However, Jai Singh's younger brother Vijay Singh supported the rival claim of Shah Alam. When Shah Alam seemed certain of victory in a battle with Azam Shah, Jai Singh strategically deserted the latter and joined the former, a not uncommon tactic in a world where constantly shifting alliances were commonplace. Yet Shah Alam, once enthroned as Emperor Bahadur Shah I, was unforgiving. Marching on Amer in late 1707, he took control of the state and enthroned Vijay Singh as Raja, reducing Jai Singh to a mere *mansabdar* of 2000/2000.

Ordered to accompany the emperor to the Deccan, he and Maharaja Ajit Singh of Jodhpur surreptitiously abandoned the march en route and returned to Rajputana in 1708 to organize Marwar, Mewar and the sympathetic lords of Amer to resist the Mughal power in the region, soon routing the combined troops of the Mughals and the Jat chief Churaman in a battle near Sambhar. Preoccupied in the Deccan with a rebellion by his younger brother Kam Baksh, Bahadur Shah tried to negotiate, partially restoring his hereditary *watan jagir* and rank to Jai Singh, who insisted as well on return of the throne and removal of Mughal forces from

Amer. The emperor, bowing to necessity due to the difficulties in the Deccan and the rising menace of the Sikhs in the north, finally restored Jai Singh as Raja of Amer in June, 1710 (Sharma 1969, 136-138). But, for the remaining two years of Emperor Bahadur Shah's life, Jai Singh's political position was tenuous.

After the death of Bahadur Shah, the political importance of Jai Singh, based in large part upon the strategic importance of Amer, began to be recognized by the Mughal administration. In April 1712, he was given the title "Mirza Raja," the *subedari* of Malwa and a *mansab* of 7000 by Emperor Jahandar Shah. In November of the same year he received the same title and honors from Farrukhsiyar, who was contending for the throne and who gained it in 1713.

The uncertainties arising from his inconsistent treatment by the Mughal court, in which there remained powerful factions inimical to his interests until about 1720, seem in certain ways to have had a detrimental effect on the level of commitment Jai Singh was willing to make. Certainly, he seems to have had no intention of breaking with the Mughal authority; he was motivated by self-interest rather than any intention to establish his independence or to challenge Mughal hegemony. Even in his rebellion of 1708, he wanted only to be replaced into his rightful position within the Mughal system; and, after regaining the throne, he faithfully represented Mughal interests in both the political arena and on the battlefield. Yet, while he displayed no evident discrimination against Muslims or Islam, he did attempt to separate himself in certain ways from Mughal practices[89] and to rectify laws and regulations that discriminated against Hindus.

[89] He did not forsake all Mughal practices. For instance, in constructing the new palace within the precincts of Jaipur, he adopted the Mughal system and its terminology in establishing various departments (*karkhanas*). Perhaps more telling is the fact that the Jaipur army continued to employ not only Muslim soldiers, but Muslim officers as well. The latter is evidenced by records of grants and gifts made to the officers contained in the *Dastur Komwar*, the record of court protocols maintained by the Jaipur court.

Some of these may be seen as superficial changes, yet they clearly went against established precedents. For instance, at some point he ceased issuing bilingual, i.e., Rajasthani and Persian, deeds and by 1712 was using only a form of Dhundari, the local dialect of Rajasthani, for such documents (Horstmann 1999a, 49). He had also stopped using the Persian calendar, using instead the Vikram dating system. In 1716, he ceased paying tribute to the emperor on his official seal, a tradition that went back many generations, and began to pay tribute to his own father, Bishan Singh. Later, in 1727, the seal was dedicated to the deity Sri Sitaramji. On a more personal note, he refrained from formally or publicly using the title "Mirza Raja"[90] which had been conferred in 1712 by both Jahandar Shah and Farrukhsiyar. Perhaps he simply preferred the title "Sawai" which was not formally bestowed until 1713, but which he had nonetheless been using for some time. Or, he may have been put off by the implications of "Mirza Raja," a title which had been bestowed by previous Mughal emperors upon Rajas Man Singh and Jai Singh I, signifying their close personal ties. As the historian Sir Jadunath Sarkar has explained (Sarkar 1984, 86), the term refers to the Persian epithet *amir-zadah*, meaning a prince, and indicates that the holder is considered to be a virtual member of the royal household.

Simultaneous with these rather cosmetic changes, during the early years of his reign Sawai Jai Singh began to use Hindu religious symbolism to signify his ascendance to power and his relation to the deities. Sometime around 1707 the figure of Govinddevji, which had been more or less in transit since being removed for protection from the Govinddeva Temple in Vrindaban in 1669, was resettled from the region of Braj to a temple in the village of Govindapura near the present-day city of Jaipur. In 1713, as if to mark a new era in his life and rule signified by the imprisonment of his rival brother, Vijay Singh, and the increased

[90] As recently pointed out by Horstmann (1999a, 2) in *In Favour of Govinddevji*.

deference shown by the new Mughal emperor Farrukhsiyar, he had Govinddev removed to a new temple at Kanak Vrindaban (Golden Vrindaban) constructed for the purpose not too distant from his residence at the Amber Fort. Architecturally, this was a substantially different style of temple than had heretofore been seen. Whereas the original temple of Govinddev built in Vrindaban in 1590 by Raja Man Singh of Amer was an imposing structure intended, in the words of art historian Catherine Asher, to "project both [his] authority and that of the Mughals" (Asher 1995, 29), Sawai Jai Singh's construction of the Govinddev temple of Kanak Vrindaban and the later one adjacent to the City Palace in Jaipur--even the building of Jaipur itself--represents an assertion of his own authority in marked distinction to that of the Mughals.[91] Beyond the borders of Jaipur, the Maharaja is best known for functional secular constructions such as observatories and caravansaries, but within the state he constructed a capital city and buildings very expressive of his own accomplishments. Among these are the temples of Govinddev, which express in their location and their architectural style an increasingly close identification of himself with the deity of Govinddev.

Departing dramatically from traditional Hindu notions of temple architecture, Kanak Vrindaban resembles the type of open, spacious palace known in Rajasthan as a *barahdari* (literally, "twelve-doorways"). It represents the "overall change of spirit from that of the ancient closed, dark, and semi-mysterious...to one of an open, airy, and spacious religious complex..." (Nath 1996, 178). Equally open and spacious, but even simpler in design and with no ornamentation, the *haveli* (indicating a "small palace" as opposed to *mandir*, indicating "temple) in which the icon of Govinddev is still housed in close proximity to the City Palace in Jaipur represents a simplification and personalization of temple construction which amply reflects the ideals of the bhakti movement. Its location beside the City Palace

[91] For a fuller analysis of the architecture of the Govinddev temples in Vrindaban and Jaipur and their social and political implications, see Horstmann 1999a and Case 1996.

within the very heart of the city, having been moved by Sawai Jai Singh progressively closer and closer to Amer and Jaipur, leaves no doubt about the symbolism of the siting of the deity, the patron deity of the city and the personal deity of the king.[92]

Expansion of Jaipur State

Most significantly, recognizing the fragility of the Mughal hold on power, Sawai Jai Singh used the politically uncertain period of the dominance of the Sayyid brothers, who between 1712 and 1719 enthroned, subsequently dethroned, and murdered three puppet emperors---Azim Shah, Jahandar Shah, and Farrukhsiyar, to expand his power base and to enlarge and consolidate the area of the state over which he ruled. When he ascended the throne in 1700, the principality of Amer was not much larger than it had been two hundred years earlier, consisting of only three *parganas*--Amer itself, Dausa and Baswa (Tod, 1995, II: 294); all other contiguous lands technically belonged to the imperial government which assigned them in *jagir* (Gupta 1986, 10-11). Once he was reinstated on the throne, his agents in court began to lobby for temporary *jagirs* in adjacent territories. Records show that during this period he received numerous grants of *parganas* or portions of them from the Mughal Emperors as wages *(tankwah)*, gifts *(inam)* and so on: Bhangarh in 1714, Malarna in 1716, Amar Sar and parts of Sarkar Ranthambor in 1717, Naraina (in which the principal Dadupanthi center was located) in 1720, and Manoharpur in 1725 (Tikkiwal 1974, 52).

Also at the beginning of this period, the Maharaja's agents in the imperial court began to offer non-Rajput officers, particularly Muslims, who held *jagirs* in areas in or adjacent to eastern Rajputana, contracts whereby they would take the territory on lease (*ijara*), extracting the revenues and paying a fixed portion to the officer, an increasingly common

[92] See Horstmann 1999b.

practice known as revenue farming. For such Muslim officers this was an attractive offer, preferable to trying to extract revenues from recalcitrant Rajput landlords or Jat farmers in an increasingly lawless region seething with unrest. Besides, Sawai Jai Singh's agents would harass those *jagirdars* who refused to cooperate (Richards 1993, 274-275).[93] Sawai Jai Singh would subsequently sub-assign these tracts to local Rajputs, the vast majority belonging to his own Rajawat branch of the Kacchwaha clan, with little going to Rathore Rajputs or Muslims (Gupta 1986, 211-212; 1993, 326). This was a conscious maneuver by the Maharaja; as early as 1707 he informed his *vakil* to secure such territories on lease from Muslim *jagirdars*, noting that "'the Rajputs who are to be posted there are already residing there'" (Bhatnagar 1974, 273). As the central authority waned, he simply assumed or was awarded permanent control over all of these *jagirs* which were being leased or held on a supposedly temporary basis. In some cases there were more concerted attempts to wrest control of the *parganas* from the Mughals: in the year 1712, during the brief and chaotic reign of Emperor Jahandar Shah who ruled less than a year, Amer revenue officers interfered with imperial collections in Rewari, Alwar and other *parganas*; they interfered with Mughal civil authority in Shekhawati; loyal Kacchwaha Rajputs took control of villages in the Naraina *pargana* by force; and Kacchwaha troops killed a Mughal magistrate in a dispute in Hindaun (Kling 1993, 257-258).

By 1726, an additional six contiguous *parganas* had been absorbed into the principality along with large portions of six others. As mentioned, these methods of enlarging the territory of Amer State reflect a deliberate policy, indicated not only by the orders sent to his representatives in court, but also by the frequent criticisms of his activities by Mughal officials who, with the weakening of imperial authority, seemed powerless to stop him (Khan

[93] Much of Richards' account is based on Gupta 1986, 1-37.

1990, 246). The dozen *parganas* comprising the enlarged state covered much of eastern Rajasthan, and included much of the present-day districts of Jaipur, Sikar, Shekhawati, Alwar, Dausa, Tonk, and Sawai Madhopur. By the time of Sawai Jai Singh's death in 1743, Amer (by then rechristened Sawai Jaipur, later abbreviated to Jaipur) was one of the largest princely states in the country, more than 20,000 square miles in area (Bhatnagar 1974, 269). In 1748, Sawai Jai Singh's son and successor, Maharaja Ishwari Singh, obtained a declaration from the Mughal court that all territories in the possession of Jaipur at that time would continue in its control in the future (Gupta 1986, 25), thus reifying the enlarged state of Jaipur constructed by Sawai Jai Singh II through cunning and diligence rather than military exploits. Later, in the 1780s during the reign of Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh, much of this territory was lost, never to be regained (Tikkiwal 1974, 155).

Political heights and religious reorganization

By the early 1720s Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II, having devoted himself for over a decade to the expansion of his territories and the protection of his interests in the Mughal court, had consolidated his position as the premier Rajput noble of the Empire as well as the principal representative of the interests of his peers among the royalty of Rajputana.

There was no longer hostility towards him at the court with the defeat and death of his trenchant enemies, the Sayyids; and he began to enjoy the prestige and undivided authority he felt was due to him. Having experienced the ebbs and flows of his fortune accompanying the factional conflicts of the wars of succession which had created havoc in the central Mughal leadership for more than a decade, his influence became firmly established during the reign of Muhammad Shah (1719-1748 CE).

Initially noncommittal, unwilling to again risk his position in an uncertain contest, Jai

Singh sent a token force of 5000 troops when Muhammad Shah had requested his assistance in suppressing a revolt by Abdullah Khan in 1720. But later he seems to have had a change of heart, for during the Battle of Hasanpur in November 1720, Jai Singh organized public prayers in Amer for the success of Muhammad Shah. Then, "overwhelmed with joy on hearing about the victory, he gave in reward a pair of embroidered slippers to the emissaries who brought the news to him." After his initial hesitation, Sawai Jai Singh first presented himself before the new emperor not long after the battle, on November 25, 1720 (Tikkiwal 1974, 50-51). In 1721 he received a *farman* from the Mughal court (KD 147) appreciating his loyalty and that of his ancestors and specifically authorizing him to settle disputes among the Rajput leaders (Bahura 1988). A month later he received from the Emperor twenty million rupees in cash along with another illustrious title (Tikkiwal, 51).

Deputed by the emperor in 1722 to subdue the Jats in the regions of Braj and Bharatpur that lay to the east, between Amer and Mathura, Jai Singh besieged Mokkam, the son of the Jat leader Churaman, at the fort of Thun for several weeks in 1723. It was ultimately captured with the help of Badan Singh, a nephew of Churaman (Sarkar 1984, 205). Having achieved success, Sawai Jai Singh was rewarded by Muhammad Shah with such titles "Raj Rajeshwar," "Rajadhiraj," and "Maharaja Sawai" (Sharma 1969, 144). That same year, he was appointed as *faujdar* of Mathura. The region around Mathura and the nearby village of Vrindavan known as Braj was considered the birthplace and homeland of Krishna, and at that time was the premier center of the bhakti communities whose worship was directed toward Krishna. It was a position that complemented the Maharaja's position as *subedar* of Agra, to which he had been appointed in 1720 (Mital 1968, 207). He himself, contrary to the custom of allowing the Emperor to do so, placed a turban upon the head of Badan Singh, naming him "Raja of Braj" and conferring the *tika* and other symbols of royalty upon him,

thus effectively establishing his political supremacy over the entire region between Agra and the borders of Marwar. It is significant, as evidence of Sawai Jai Singh's increasing autonomy, that Badan Singh swore allegiance directly to him rather than the emperor; and that, although Badan Singh's successors adopted the title of Maharaja, he contented himself with the simpler and subordinate appellation of "*thakur*."

Sawai Jai Singh had earlier been assigned the *faujdari* of Mathura and Hindaun (where the lineage of the Dadupanthi Naga Happaji was established) in July 1713, though apparently not for long since he was later that year asked to assume the *subedari* of Ahmedabad, later revised to that of Malwa (Bhattacharya 1993, 57). His father, Bishan Singh, had previously served as *faujdar* of Mathura, having been appointed to the post by Aurangzeb at the time of his accession to the throne of Amer in 1688 (Sharma 1969, 128-129). Later, his son and heir-apparent, Shiv Singh, also served as *faujdar* of Mathura, for he is mentioned as such in a *parwana* (KD 63) dated late 1717, the fifth regnal year of Farrukhsiyar (Bahura 1988). An earlier *parwana* (KD 64) indicates that he had been granted the *faujdari* of Mathura and Hindaun in September, 1716.

Since at least the time of Raja Bharmal, Mathura and Vrindaban--as well as other important places of pilgrimage such as Prayag and Gaya--had been dear to the hearts of the Kacchwaha rulers of Amer. Indeed, Amer too had been a center of Vaishnava, more specifically Ramanandi, activity since the establishment of the Galta *gaddi* by Krishna Das Payahari during the reign of Prithviraj Kacchwaha (1503-1527 CE) in the early sixteenth century. According to legend, he defeated Tara Nath in a contest of yogic powers, driving the Naths and other Shaivas from Amer and converting the Kacchwaha dynasty to a system of Vaishnava belief. Later on, the important *rasik* Ramanandi *gaddi* of Revasa and the Nimbark *gaddi* of Salimabad were established nearby, yet the Kacchwahas continued to offer

patronage to and maintain a close connection with the Krishnaite Gaudiya Sampraday of Vrindaban, culminating in the installation of the figure of Govinddev as the tutelary deity of the city of Jaipur.

For Sawai Jai Singh, the *faujdari* of Mathura was not just a symbolic post. It was the culmination of an intimate and influential relationship with the area and its religious establishments his family had maintained for well over a century. Thus, it seems to have stimulated his interest in religious matters and to have confirmed his sense of his own leadership in them as well. Having reached this apex of power and influence over the expanded territories of Amer and the region of Braj, Jai Singh spent much of the next seven years in Amer engaged in two principal occupations: the planning and building of his new capital city of Sawai Jaipur, and the cultivation of arts, sciences and religion. As a scholar of classical texts, Jai Singh saw his role as a Hindu king to be religious as well as political and secular. He seems to have taken this responsibility quite seriously, acting as an advocate for Hindu interests in the Mughal court while, closer to home, taking an intense interest in the sectarian developments that were taking place within the realm of his authority, particularly the rise of the many new bhakti communities.

Describing Sawai Jai Singh's generally orthodox attitudes, P. D. Mital (1968, 422) has written in his 1968 history of the religious communities of Braj:

> "Sawai Jai Singh was a hearty supporter of *smarta dharma*, the highest nurturer of scholars of the Veda and *shastras*, and a partisan of the ancient *paramparas*. He conceived that traditional Hindu dharma, as represented by the four *sampradays*, was being harmed by the independent position of the new bhakti communities and especially by their 'revolutionary' attitudes toward ancient beliefs."

He felt that some of the new communities were exhibiting contempt for the four traditional *sampradays* as well as for Vedic traditions. In his view, "it was a transgression of

religious decorum that he was not ready to tolerate" (ibid., 210).

Even as early as 1718 (VS 1775), at a time when his eldest son Shiv Singh would still have been *faujdar* of Mathura,[94] Sawai Jai Singh is said to have convened a conference of all Vaishnava communities to discuss the requirements for inclusion in the *catuh sampraday*, the four Vaishnava communities. In his history, Mital (1968, 210; 340) in fact mentions two conferences in Amer to which the various contemporary sectarian communities were invited for the purpose of determining their legitimacy as Vaishnava sects, one in 1718 (VS 1775) and one in 1723 (VS 1780). Having approached the pinnacle of his temporal power and influence, it would appear that Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh convened these conferences of the various Vaishnava and bhakti communities for the purpose of unifying them and legitimating them through a conscious identification with traditional, *shastric* models of Hindu belief and practice. While the instrumental factor for calling the first conference may well have been Ramanandi complaints about Gaudiya practices and their legitimacy, the resulting call for a realignment of all Vaishnava communities fit in well with the ideological direction of Sawai Jai Singh's thinking. That is, the sudden influx into the territory of Amer of a sectarian community of growing influence with well-established ties to the Maharaja must have presented a potential challenge to the previously dominant position of the Ramanandis. The possibility of a decline in influence with a corresponding decline in patronage would have been a matter of concern. Yet, ultimately it was not just the Gaudiyas but all sects that were required to establish their legitimacy.

According to Mital (1968, 340), representatives of the various religious communities were invited to Amer in 1718 to demonstrate the authenticity of their doctrines. The Wrights (1993) incorrectly speculate that this conference, which they view as a debate dealing

[94] Sarkar (1984, 202) writes that Kumar Shiv Singh died in Mathura in 1724 at the age of 22, and that at the time he had been *faujdar* of Mathura for a number of years.

exclusively with questions of Gaudiya legitimacy, must have taken place "about 1714," that is, shortly before the image of Govinddev was moved from Govindapura, where certain traditions say that it was visited by the Gaudiya representative Baladeva, to Kanak Vrindaban, located near the Amber Fort on the road between Amer and the future capital city of Jaipur. However, there is no tradition and certainly no record of such a "debate" in Amer at that time, although there is a tradition, referred to by Mital, of a meeting of representatives of the four *sampradays* in Vrindaban in 1713. Additionally, this would seem to conflict with the Wrights' assertion that the conference was called due to questions about the legitimacy of the Gaudiya lineage raised by Ramanandis who felt that Govinddev's "popularity with the royal family challenged the Ramanandi hegemony" (Wright 1993, 162). While others such as Roy (1958, 171) and Elkman (1986, 45) agree that Ramanandi complaints about Gaudiya practices and questions about their legitimacy may have led to the calling of the conference, the Ramanandis are more likely to have felt threatened by a potential loss of patronage only after the move of Govinddev to Kanak Vrindaban in 1714.[95] This would coincide more coherently with Mital's date of 1718 or Elkman's estimate of 1720-1723 for the conference at which the Gaudiyas were required to establish their legitimacy. Significantly, considering the date, the Wrights themselves (1993, 173) cite in a footnote a formal agreement issued in 1722 by four different (unspecified) religious groups of Vrindavan to the four primary Gaudiya temples in which they affirm their subordination to the Gaudiyas and agree that they will "be considered offenders if they do not follow the direction of the Gaudiya *gurus*." Such an acknowledgment may well have been a result of, or even a prelude to, an Amer conference in the early 1720s.

At the time of the conference, the renowned leader of the Gaudiya (or Chaitanya)

[95] It may be recalled that it had been in transit between Vrindavan and Amer since 1669 CE. See Nath 1996.

Sampraday was Visvanath Chakravarti. Because of his age, he sent his disciple Baladeva Vidyabhushan[96] as his representative. Baladeva presented the doctrines of the sect, but was informed by Sawai Jai Singh that there needed to be a commentary on the Vedanta *sutras* to support their doctrines; otherwise, it is implied, they could not be considered legitimate. He sat down and, in a short while, produced the *Govinda Bhashya*, a commentary on the Vedanta *sutras* which apparently satisfied the Maharaja. However, as De has pointed out in his account of Vaishnavism, it was "hardly consistent" with earlier doctrines and traditions (1961, 22). Elkman concurs, noting that the *Govinda Bhashya* does not command the same respect among Gaudiyas as the works of the Goswamis and others, and that it is "difficult to say" even today to what extent it is studied or what has been its influence, if any, on the philosophy of the sect (1986, 48). For this reason, Elkman believes that the writing of the commentary, which relies greatly on Madhava's *Brahmasutra* commentary, may have been simply Baladeva's own attempt to further legitimize the Gaudiyas by injecting more of Madhva's philosophy into their discourse and to place them "within the accepted bounds of Vedanta" by providing a commentary on the authoritative texts of Vedanta for those who had previously de-emphasized such commentaries (1986, 45-46). He argues that the principal issue to be resolved was that of lineage, that is, demonstrating that the Gaudiyas were not trying to establish an independent sect, but could legitimately trace their lineage (*guru-parampara*) to Madhava (ibid., 42), thereby negating the necessity of producing an independent sectarian commentary like the *Govinda Bhashya*.

[96] Entwistle (1987, 192) states that the Gaudiya representative was Sarvabhauma, although he notes that alternative traditions recognize it to have been Baladeva.

The Amer conference of 1723[97] is said to have been for the specific purpose of establishing "a unity of opinion among the various Vaishnava communities in order to eliminate dissent" (Mital 1968, 210). Mital pictures Sawai Jai Singh as causing a good deal of hardship and affliction for some of the new bhakti communities because of his intransigence in pursuing this "revolutionary attempt" to unify all of the sects under the banner of the *catuh sampraday*. He writes: "He gave the leaders of the various bhakti communities an ultimatum that they should either join one of the four traditional *sampradays* or demonstrate the scriptural authority for their continued independent existence" (ibid.). Although their doctrines may have differed, some of the new communities were already nominally affiliated with one of the four traditional *sampradays*. Thus, when directed to clarify assert their affiliation with one of the four traditional Vaishnava religious traditions, the Ramanandis chose to be affiliated with the Sri Sampraday to which they traced the lineage of Ramanand, the Vallabhites with the Vishnuswamis, and the Chaitanyites with the Madhavas.

While there did exist in some cases historical connections to one or another of the traditional groups, a closer examination indicates that these were probably forced affiliations. The newer Krishnaite bhakti sects, characterized by emotionalism, although nominally linked to the older bhakti traditions of South Indian origin, in reality had little in common with them. Devotees of Ram mostly adhered to the Sri Sampraday of Ramanuja, but the increasing popularity of Ram as an object of worship had already caused many of his devotees to

[97] Entwistle (1987, 192), like Horstmann and others, seems confused by the two dates of 1718 and 1723 and the purpose of each. He says in one note that Sawai Jai Singh summoned representatives of all Vaishnava sects to a conference, "*probably in 1723*," to prove their authenticity based upon their adherence to Vedic principles. Another note commenting on the same paragraph says that Mital suggests a date of 1718 for the conference attended by representatives of the *catuh sampraday* in which the Gaudiya position was defended. Ultimately, there are conflicting traditions and no definite record as to what transpired at each event. Horstmann (Thiel-Horstmann 1985) mentions a conference only in 1718. It may be significant in trying to date the conference(s) that, according to Sarkar (1984), Sawai Jai Singh lived in Delhi continuously from May, 1721 until 1723 when he moved to Mathura.

identify themselves as specifically Ramanandi and the inevitable schism, perhaps delayed by Jai Singh's efforts, eventually occurred in the early twentieth century.[98] Similarly, the only support for the theory of Chaitanyite affiliation with the tradition of Madhava seems to be the *guru parampara* given by Baladeva[99] at the beginning of his *Govinda Bhashya*, about which De exclaims that "there can be no doubt that the list was made up for the occasion mainly from hearsay and imagination" (1961, 14-15).

The Radhavallabhi (also known as Hit Harivamsh) and Haridas communities were as yet independent. In response to Jai Singh's command, the fledgling Haridasi community was split, with the householders choosing to associate themselves with the Vishnuswamis and the sadhus choosing the Nimbark *sampraday* as their "umbrella" organization. The leader of the Radhavallabhis, Acharya Rooplal Goswami, angered the Maharaja by his unwillingness to subordinate the community of devotees to one of the four traditional organizations, even refusing to attend the conference.[100] As a result, Jai Singh sent his administrators to Mathura to enforce "harsh measures" against him and others of like mind, forcing Rooplal Goswami and his immediate followers to leave Vrindaban and resettle elsewhere. "Some went to Orccha and Etawah. Rooplal fled to Delhi with his relatives, but even there was harassed and forced to flee by agents of Sawai Jai Singh. He only returned to Vrindaban in *Samvat* 1794 (1737 CE)[101] when his mother was dying and wanted to return there to die. She did die as soon as reaching the edge of Vrindaban, but Rooplal was immediately forced to leave again." This is a

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[98] For discussions of the schism between Ramanandis and Ramanujis, see Burghart 1978 and Pinch 1996.

[99] The fact that this attempt to justify alignment with the Madhava *sampraday* was included in the commentary would indicate that both events, the composition of the *Govinda Bhashya* and the command to become affiliated with one of the traditional *sampradays*, occurred at the same conference. However, it remains uncertain whether this was in 1718 or 1723.

[100] This account is based upon Mital 1968, 422 ff.

[101] VS, or Vikram *Samvat*, refer to the Vikram Era calendar in use in north India. There is a difference of +56-57 years between it and the Christian calendar. Unless specifically noted as VS or *Samvat*, all dates used herein are CE.

very telling example of the geographical limits of the Maharaja's powers of enforcement as well as the extent to which he would go to ensure that his edicts regarding adherence to clearly delineated principles of Vaishnava practice and belief were obeyed. In an example to be cited later, the Dadupanthi Mahant Krishnadev fled to Merta, in the neighboring state of Marwar, to escape enforcement of Sawai Jai Singh's edict regarding his marriage.

Edicts and letters

As another indication of Jai Singh's preoccupation with eliminating what he felt to be "undesirable" elements of religious practice, the period from about 1725 to 1736 was marked by a regular correspondence between Sawai Jai Singh and the representatives of various religious communities, predominantly Vaishnava. The Maharaja's original letters and edicts have not survived, but what have been preserved in the Kapad Dwara collection of the Maharajas of Jaipur are the responses. From these, one can get an idea of Sawai Jai Singh's particular concerns and note that the correspondence is of two distinct types. Firstly, he issued edicts concerning the proper behavior and belief systems for sadhus, apparently requesting in return that the recipient send a pledge (*navisht*) of his willingness to accept such directives. The vast majority of such pledges referred to universally applicable behavioral criteria to which all sadhus were expected to adhere. Yet a few pledges indicate that the Maharaja took a personal interest in individualized cases of inheritance and succession. In one example, in an undated letter (KD 1238) from Swami Jugaldas, he tells the Maharaja that the village, cash and land belonging to him will be handed over to Srilal, the grandson of his guru, and that none of his own disciples will make a claim on the property. There are other examples as well in the Jaipur records of the Maharaja's interest in the personal circumstances of individual sadhus within his jurisdiction. Secondly, Maharaja Sawai Jai

Singh would write to learned pandits and sectarian leaders to ask their opinions concerning particular theological points, or to ask whether they agreed with his own position on those points, in an apparent effort to reconcile scriptural and philosophical differences.

His primary preoccupation was with checking what he viewed as heterogeneous, even heterodox, tendencies that had begun to appear among various religious communities, particularly the new bhakti communities. On the one hand, he felt that they needed to adhere to traditional Vedic and Puranic principles as enunciated in the classical scriptures. He himself was intimately familiar with the *shastras* and had composed four learned treatises dealing with theological topics. Beyond this, he was opposed to particular practices and wanted to see them eliminated. These included branding the body of sectarian adherents, and certain other practices which had become common among sadhus: engaging in commerce for the purpose of accumulating wealth, the carrying of weapons and the keeping of women. Additionally, according to Horstmann (1985a), the mahant should be a Brahmin observing Vaishnava religious duties.[102] He was further opposed to commensality among disparate castes, and the mixing of Muslims and Hindus, which was occurring within some of the new bhakti sects.

For example, in a *navisht* dated *shravan sudi* 9, *Samvat* 1790 (August, 1733 CE), a group of Dadupanthi sadhus agreed that they "would follow the principles of the *shastras* as desired by the Maharaja and would have no contacts with the Muslims" (KD 1282). Now this is a significant concession, for the Dadu Panth at that time ostensibly continued to follow the teachings of Dadu and apparently still counted Muslims within its membership. Yet, it seems to have been at this time that the Dadupanthis ceased accepting Muslims and, at least

[102] Jaitram, the Naraina *mahant* at that time, is described by Dadupanthis as having been a Brahmin, although there is no definite evidence of his origins. Whatever his origins, it would have been politically correct at the time for him to claim to be a Brahmin.

within the precincts of Jaipur State, women as sadhus. Despite the continuing influence of the ideology of the equality of all religious paths preached by Dadu, the political pressures put upon sectarian leadership by Sawai Jai Singh II were instrumental in the decision by the sect to embrace, at least nominally, the principles of the *shastras* and the tenets of Vaishnava belief as enunciated by the Maharaja. Those legitimate sadhus unable to comply were expected to become householders (*grihastha*), for whose benefit Sawai Jai Singh established a colony in Mathura ironically named Vairagyapura (Entwistle 1987, 191).[103]

While the *navisht* in question apparently was received shortly after the death of Mahant Jaitram in 1732, the foundations for such a commitment would have been laid during his tenure as mahant, for Sawai Jai Singh had been emphasizing such principles in his communications with sadhus for a number of years. By 1733 the predilections and desires of the Maharaja would have been well known to all religious groups within the orbit of his rule. During this period he had given Ramanandi and other Vaishnava sadhus permission to marry and many seem to have taken him up on it. For instance, Jagannath, the chief *sebait* of the Govinddev temple in the late 1720s, was the first of his lineage to marry, after which the position has been passed from father to son to this day (Roy 1978, 165). Alternatively, an undated *navisht* (KD 1143) from the mahant Harisevak promises that he would adopt *sannyas* and remain as mahant, leaving the pecuniary affairs of the *math* to be looked after by a householder. Clearly there was a choice involved for the sadhus, *mahants* and *pujaris* concerned, but it was a strict, clear-cut choice between celibacy and marriage. As an indication

[103] Horstmann has also noted the irony of this designation, meaning "City of Asceticism" or "City of Renunciation."

of the Maharaja's seriousness and his power of enforcement[104] of these rules, it should be pointed out that at about the same time this commitment was received from the sadhus of Naraina, he was attempting to compel the tutelary head of the Dadupanthis, the newly selected Naraina Mahant Krishnadev (1732-1753 CE), to marry.

As the story goes, Sawai Jai Singh had been informed, or believed, that the Ramanandi mahant of Galta, at that time Hariacharya, had become involved with a woman. Perhaps there was something to the charge or perhaps, as Roy (1978, 25) implies, the suspicions of Sawai Jai Singh were raised by the somewhat erotic writings of the previous mahant, Madhuracharya (*florit* 1726 CE), who, in imitation of the devotees of Krishna, had composed Sanskrit verses on the love life of Ram. Madhuracharya was one of those Vaishnava *mahants* who had signed the undated *navisht* (KD 1520) promising to observe the rules regarding separation of the castes (*varna*) as well as those of marriage and celibacy: namely, that boys should be trained in *seva-puja* until the age of fifteen after which they should either choose marriage within their caste or life-long celibacy. The Maharaja's response to the information about Hariacharya was to insist that the mahant get married, following the *shastric* pattern of the four stages of life and the example of the Gaudiya Vaishnava Goswamis of Vrindaban. The mahant agreed provided that the Dadupanthi mahant, Krishnadev, would be forced to marry as well. The validity of this account is strengthened by the acknowledgment by the present-day Ramanandis of Galta that Hariacharya (d. 1757 CE),[105] the eighth mahant of the

[104] Maharajas frequently maintained the right to appoint (or dismiss) religious functionaries such as *mahants* and even *pujaris*. See KD 1284, in which Mahant Ramsevak (also known as Ramdas) of Revasa agrees that the Maharaja could remove him from office if he defies the Maharaja's wishes. Habib (1996) mentions documents that indicate that the *pujaris* of the temple of Govinddev were appointed directly by the Rajas of Amer at least as early as 1643, possibly earlier (145), and that in 1739 Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II directly appointed one Ramkishan as *adhikari* (manager) of the Madanmohan temple in Vrindaban (155).

[105] The year of his accession to the *gaddi* is unknown, but can be ascertained to have occurred between 1726, when Madhuracharya was still alive, and the early 1730s.

Galta *gaddi*, was the first of that lineage to marry; since that time all of the *mahants* have been direct descendants of their predecessors (Roy 1978, 24).

Whether Krishnadev was truly celibate or not is open to speculation, despite the Dadupanthi assertion that he was being harassed because of the human failings of the Galta mahant; but his reaction to Sawai Jai Singh's edict was to flee to the Marwari town of Merta where he established his seat and remained until his death in 1753. Only then, with Jaipur under the rule of Sawai Jai Singh's more liberal son Sawai Madho Singh I, was his successor persuaded to return to Jaipur territory.

Similarly, when the Nimbark Acharya Vrindavan Dev of Salimabad died in 1640 CE, Sawai Jai Singh II appointed a Maharashtrian named Jairamdas who had been a householder disciple of the Vrindavan Dev as his successor, and also established him as head of the Nimbark *gaddi* in the city of Jaipur. Because the previous *acharyas* had all been celibate Gaur Brahmins from North India, the Nimbark adherents did not accept this householder from the south, although none was willing to speak against him in the presence of the Maharaja. However, when the Maharaja died three years later, they removed Jairamdas and replaced him with another disciple of Vrindaban Dev (Mital 1968, 361).

In another *navisht*, dated VS 1782 (1725 CE), certain Lalpanthis of Sanganer agreed to give up the Lalpanth and to follow the Vaishnava dharma as preached by Jiva Goswami (KD 1145). Laldas was a Meo[106] from what is now the Alwar district of Rajasthan who, in the mid-seventeenth century, promulgated teachings akin to those of Kabir that sought to somehow reconcile Hinduism and Islam. Lalpanthis living in areas under the jurisdiction of Sawai Jai Singh were apparently given the choice of accepting a Vaishnava philosophy, meaning in particular the Gaudiya Vaishnava philosophy of Jiva Goswami, or removing

[106] Meos were "a nominally Muslim agricultural group, but of probable Rajput extraction and of clear Rajput custom" (Haynes 1978, 422). For more on Meo identity, see Mayaram 1997.

themselves to other jurisdictions. Significantly, there is no record that the Dadu Panth, which had somewhat similar origins and a similar initial ideology, was singled out in this manner as being somehow non-Vaishnava. It is quite plausible then that sometime prior to 1725, possibly at one of the conferences of the *catuh sampraday* called by Sawai Jai Singh in 1718 or 1723, the Dadupanthis had already made a like commitment to adhere to the principles of Vaishnava dharma.

It is a commitment that continues to be nominally preserved to this day, even though there seems to be no clearly recorded point at which such a shift in philosophy and allegiance occurred. Certainly extant Dadupanthi literature is silent on the subject, the absence of discussion supporting the tacit viewpoint that no dissonance exists between the contemporary belief and practice and that of Dadu and his immediate disciples. The primary organization and many of the established systems are conceded to have been instituted under Jaitram (1693-1732), the first Brahmin mahant of Naraina, which accounts for the preeminent position of his *samadhi* and its worship within the religious complex at Naraina. Yet, although he was a contemporary of Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II, there is little evidence beyond a handful of such pledges to indicate the latter's direct influence upon the Dadupanthis' ideological tilt towards Vaishnavism. There is certainly little if any direct evidence that the Maharaja showed much interest in the Nath Panth, the Dadu Panth or other "people's religions" as they are termed by Roy (1978, 20). However, as one of the principal religious institutions in Jaipur territory along with the *gaddis* of Revasa and Galta, they must have been invited to the religious conferences, and were certainly aware of the Maharaja's inclinations and of the pressures he was exerting upon all sectarian communities. That the ideology and, to some degree, the practices changed during this period either in direct response to or in anticipation of the wishes of the Maharaja, a powerful benefactor who had

the power to replace the mahant and banish the sect, is certain. That some may have already begun to change prior to the direct involvement of Sawai Jai Singh, perhaps in response to other societal influences, is possible.

Yet the specificity of some of the documents preserved from the period make it clear that the Maharaja had express reforms in mind. For example, the previously mentioned communication (KD 1520) from a group of Ramanandi *mahants* which includes Madhuracharya makes very precise promises, such as: that the four *varnas* would not dine together; that one person (presumably of the appropriate caste) would serve only one row at a feast; that a Vaishnava boy should be kept in *seva-puja* up to the age of fifteen and after that would be free to marry in his own caste unless he should choose life-long *brahmachari*; that no Vaishnava mahant would choose an *antyaj* (untouchable) as his disciple; that the *ekadashi* fast should be observed in accordance with particular guidelines; that anyone deviating from these principles would be regarded as irreligious. These documents preserved in the Kapad Dwara collection show that the Dadupanthis, too, made specific accommodations to comply with the expressed wishes of Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II: the exclusion of Muslims, the agreement not to bear arms, the appointment of Brahmin *mahants* to avoid having the situation in which a sadhu might be initiated by someone of lower caste, the strict division between sadhus and householders.[107]

Control and organization of armed sadhus in Jaipur

[107] The strict division would have meant the elimination of female *sadhus*. Although there were and are still such female *sadhvis* within the Dadu Panth, significantly there are none at all in Jaipur. At the annual mela, I questioned Swami Brahm Prakash about the *sadhvis* I had noted. He said that they mostly came from Marwar (Jodhpur) and added that in Naraina "it is not our custom" to initiate women. This situation very likely could be traced back to the reign of Sawai Jai Singh, when he banned them in Jaipur but did not have authority to ban them in Marwar and other states. Very likely, it was a tradition maintained in exile in Marwar by Mahant Krishnadev while it disappeared in the region around Jaipur.

The increasingly common custom of sadhus to bear weapons seems to have been of primary concern to the Maharaja. Many of the *navishts* received by him between 1725 and 1736 contained pledges by sadhus and *mahants* of every persuasion---Dasnamis, Dadupanthis, Ramanandis and others---not to carry weapons and to shun those who do.

According to sectarian sources, the idea of organizing Vaishnava sadhus into *akharas* was first broached at the 1713 Vrindaban conference called by Swami Balanand, a Ramanandi mahant from Amer whose seat is located in what is now the city of Jaipur. It is said that nothing substantive was accomplished at this conference due to differences of opinion among the various sects, particularly between those of Ramaite and Krishnaite persuasion. Whether this earliest of conferences was held during Sawai Jai Singh's initial tenure as *faujdar* of Mathura, and whether he therefore had anything to do with that conference, cannot be determined from available records. It suffices to say that there is no tradition linking him to the event and that, at any rate, he was at that time still preoccupied with his own political survival which had been in question since he had been replaced on the throne of Amer by his younger brother, Vijay Singh, in 1707. Only with the accession of Farrukhsiyar as emperor and the arrest and imprisonment of Vijay Singh, both of which occurred in 1713, could he begin to concentrate on other matters. Even then, he was preoccupied with expanding his power base in the face of court intrigues which continued until the death of the Sayyid brothers in 1719. Consequently, during most of that period both he and Maharaja Ajit Singh of Jodhpur remained in court (Bhattacharya 1993, 57).

Another conference was held in Brahmapuri, just outside the newly constructed capital city of Sawai Jaipur, in 1734 (Mital 1968, 358), the same year in which Sawai Jai Singh marked his ascendancy with the performance of an *asvamedha* sacrifice, the first in some 700 years (Bhatnagar 1974, 264 ff). Significantly, it was also the same year that Sawai

Jai Singh called a conference of Rajput leaders at Hurda to discuss the organization of defensive measures against the threat of Maratha incursions into Rajputana. The Brahmapuri conference was organized by the Maharaja and presided over by Balanand and the Nimbark Mahant of Salimabad, Acharya Vrindaban Dev (1697-1740 CE) (Mital 1968, 356). It does appear that it was at this conference that Vaishnava *anis* and *akharas* were first organized, although the Maharaja's persistent opposition to the bearing of arms by sadhus indicates that they had been doing so on an individual or informal, loosely organized basis for some time. This presents a conundrum. If, as sectarian traditions insist, Sawai Jai Singh organized and attended the conference at which armed Vaishnava sadhus were organized in a military fashion, how are we to explain the recorded fact that for at least another two years he was still extracting pledges from local sadhus that they would not bear weapons?

Sectarian sources are unanimous in attributing this military organization to Balanand, although they are universally unclear about the date. The *akharas* he is supposed to have established were primarily, if not exclusively, Ramanandi; Vrindaban Dev is believed to have held a second conference in the same year of 1734 at Neem ka Thana, at the edge of Jaipur territory near Shekhawati, where he established *akharas* of armed Nimbark *vairagis*. Yet we know from other sources that by the mid-1730s armed *vairagis* had begun to appear in Ayodhya and to settle there after having driven out armed Dasnami *sannyasi* Nagas, who had been occupying it for more than twenty years. Given Sawai Jai Singh's strict opposition to armed sadhus, yet accepting that he actively participated in the Brahmapuri conference, one is faced with a dilemma. Undoubtably, they could not have been organized without his knowledge and approval, yet he continued to express his disapproval even after the conference.

The solution seems to lie in his own acknowledgment of the limited extent of his

authority. For, although the 1730s saw the appearance in Ayodhya of *akharas* of armed *vairagis* said to be coming from Rajasthan, the same period records no *vairagi* or Naga activity in Jaipur or the region around Mathura. In fact, such activity does not appear for another twenty years. Although there are no records or other accounts so indicating, my conclusion is that Sawai Jai Singh during the course of the 1734 conference at Brahmapuri agreed to the organization of armed groups of Vaishnava sadhus for the purpose of defense against similar bands of armed *sannyasi* Nagas, which had been known to attack and kill Vaishnavas, but continued to discourage their proliferation within his own territories.[108] Even Vrindaban Dev, who was in favor with the Maharaja, was compelled to retire at some distance to Neem ka Thana to organize his armies.

Thus, the power of the Ramanandi sadhus, which had been concentrated in and around Jaipur in the *gaddis* of Galta, Jaipur and Revasa was soon shifted to Ayodhya. Sometime prior to the administration of Safdar Jang (1739-1754 CE) Abhayaram Das and other two other Ramanandi Nagas had gone to Ayodhya from Jaipur and established separate *akharas* there. Hans Bakker (1986, 132) has written that the "recently founded (Ramanandi) *akharas*" made their earliest appearance during the administration of Sadat Khan Bahadur (that is, sometime between 1722-1739 CE) to combat the entrenched Shaiva ascetics. The Shaivas were finally driven out and one of their last strongholds was reconquered by Abhayaram Das and the Nirvani *akhara* during the rule of Safdar Jang, that is, sometime after 1739, indicating that the Vaishnavas could not have arrived too much before that date. With

[108] This sort of apparent inconsistency is not without precedent; Jan Heesterman has argued that it is characteristic of the fluid Indian concept of tradition as it manifests in the present. He gives the example of Manu, who "brands the eater of meat as the worst of sinners" while also conceding that eating meat is "the natural way of acting" (Heesterman 1979, 63). As Manu was able to resolve the apparent dichotomy by acknowledging that eating meat is sinful, but after all not eating meat is preferable to eating it, so Sawai Jai Singh was able to resolve his dilemma by acknowledging that carrying weapons is wrong, but if you're going to do it, don't do it here.

Safdar Jang's permission, Abhayaram Das began construction of the Hanumangarhi temple, which was not completed until sometime in the 1770s (ibid., 145).

The Digambari *akhara* was established in Ayodhya about the same time by Balaram Das (Simha 1957, 134). Although his origins are not specifically stated, the fact that he was a *rasik* Ramanandi would indicate that he probably came from Revasa, in Jaipur State. The majority of sadhus initially comprising these *akharas* are, in fact, asserted to have been Rajputs from Rajputana, many of the earliest coming from Jaipur and later ones from Kota and Bundi. Yet, as they became established in the regions east of Rajasthan, the Rajput influence among the Ramanandi *vairagis* began to be diluted as many Shudras began to be recruited, as evidenced by the fact that among those *akharas* "commensal rules as well as prohibitions against the eating of meat and taking of narcotics seem to have been generally ignored" (Lorenzen 1978, 70). With Rajput leadership, and the patronage of Safdar Jang and Shuja-ud-daula, the succeeding Nawab of Oudh (1754-1775 CE), they began to erect new temples and to establish Ayodhya as the primary center of Ramanandi and *vairagi* power (Simha 1957, 133; Srivastav 1957, 227 ff).

Theological inquiries

As a student of the *dharma shastras*, Sawai Jai Singh imbibed the concept of the king as one who maintains the established order. Jan Gonda (1966, 18-19) has summarized this traditional notion of the duties of the king by saying that he should "compel his subjects to follow their respective dharmas and make all of them do everything in accordance with righteousness." He continues that, in the classical conception, the king is not just a civil ruler, "but also the final controlling power in preserving religious and spiritual institutions, in maintaining the status quo. He is to see that people follow the dharma. In so doing he acts on

the advice of his purohita and the assemblies of learned men." Despite the greater emphasis upon the personal ties connecting the Rajput king with his clansmen whose support he required to maintain his legitimacy, the responsibilities of the Rajput king did not significantly differ from the classical model. Discussing the application of this classical Indian political theory to Rajput polity, Edward Haynes has explained that, in such a state "where power and authority lay diffused throughout a community of potential rulers, throughout the whole of the ruling lineage and its unrelated extensions, it was the duty (dharma) of the king to serve as the integrator, mediator, and ceremonial emblem of the ultimate societal unity" (Haynes 1990, 464).

Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II had been greatly influenced by the Maharashtrian Brahmin Jagannath, his tutor in the Vedas who also helped develop his interest in astronomy as a youth (Bhatnagar 1974, 314-315), and who later performed the *asvamedha* for him (Mandava 1985, 68). With such a strong theological background, from about 1725 to 1736 he carried on an extensive correspondence with a variety of (predominantly Vaishnava) *mahants*, theologians and pandits, soliciting their opinions on a variety of theological topics and seeking their assessment of his own views.[109]

In general, these *sammati patras* (letters of opinion) agree with particular statements made by Jai Singh in his original correspondence with them. They agree that the Chaitanyite principles as expounded by Gopal Bhatt, Jiva Goswami and others are agreeable to them (KD 1501-1507); that the teachings of Shankaracharya, Nimbark, Shridhar Swami, and Jiva Goswami are in principle similar so that there should be no arguments between their adherents (KD 1521-1530); that the path of bhakti as propounded by the Maharaja is consistent with the *shrutis* and *smritis* (KD 1523); that the principles of the *shastras*

[109] See Bahura 1988.

incorporated by the Maharaja in his own four works are agreeable to all and consistent with the Vedas and Puranas (KD 1295).

Some of these letters of opinion deal with very specific philosophical issues. A group of Madhava *sannyasis* from Udipi (KD 1317) write to explain their philosophy and agree that the *atman* (soul) is a part of the *paramatman* (oversoul), that they are simultaneously one but appear different. In one letter (KD 1527), the writers agree with the Maharaja that Shridhar Swami supported the worship of both *sagun* and *nirgun* forms of the deity, an opinion which would have attenuated any criticism of the Dadupanthis for asserting and practicing a *nirgun* ideology. In short, as far as the Dadupanthis were concerned, it was not so much their ideology that concerned the Maharaja and that demanded reform, but rather it was particular non-traditional and non-*shastric* practices which characterized them as well as other Vaishnava and non-Vaishnava religious communities alike. Some of the letters (KD 1501-1507) include specific pledges as well among their philosophical agreements: to prohibit the eating of leftovers, to outcaste persons not agreeing with the principles enunciated by the Maharaja, to practice modes of worship as laid down by the Goswamis.[110]

Over and over it appears in these documents that Sawai Jai Singh's primary concern was with unifying all Vaishnava sects and communities into a cohesive, orthodox whole bound together by a common philosophy of bhakti rooted in the traditions of the Vedas and Puranas. In order to achieve that unity, it would be necessary to reform irreligious and objectionable practices that may have crept into these communities over the centuries, practices which involved ignoring the injunctions of the *shastras* regarding caste interactions,

[110] The Wrights (1993, 173) mention a formal agreement (*ikramama*) in the collection of the Institute for Vaishnava Studies in Vrindaban (document D016) delivered in 1722 from four unidentified religious groups of Vrindaban to the four main Gaudiya temples in which they affirm their subordination to Gaudiya leadership and agree to be considered offenders if they do not follow the direction of the Gaudiya gurus. It is unclear whether or how this agreement is related to contemporaneous efforts by Sawai Jai Singh.

fasting, relations with women, branding of the body, and so on. Yet within those bounds, he clearly felt that the individual devotee should have the freedom to choose from alternative paths.

In short, Sawai Jai Singh was a proponent of Vaishnava orthodoxy and used his royal stature and political influence to attempt to purge the burgeoning heterodox bhakti movements, many of them at that time only loosely organized, of practices which he viewed as inimical to a unified Vaishnava and Hindu identity in accordance with traditional principles of *sanatan dharma*. It does not appear, however, that this was an attempt to present a united Hindu front to counter the influences of Islam. Rather, it was simply an attempt to purify Vaishnava religion of its excesses, somewhat akin to the nineteenth-century attempts at Hindu reformation, while at the same time confirming his own position as the foremost Hindu king of the time.

Much has been made of the symbolic nature of the icon of Govinddev and its increasing importance in the life of Sawai Jai Singh and the citizenry of Jaipur. Despite a philosophical inclination toward the philosophy of Jiva Goswami and the Gaudiyas,[111] and despite an obvious fondness for the figure of Govinddev, Sawai Jai Singh cannot be said to have been an adherent of any particular sectarian form of Vaishnava belief. Like his forefathers, he was Vaishnava, but a rather catholic one who worshipped Govinddev as well as Sri Sitaram; who had constructed in Jaipur temples to Surya, Kalki, Ganesh and others; who continued the Kacchwaha tradition of visiting on important occasions the Shakti temple of Siladevi in the Amber Palace where until recent decades animal sacrifice was a daily occurrence; who revived Vedic *yagyas* such as the *asvamedha* and *rajasuya*; who visited the

[111] Horstmann (1999, 22) cites as evidence of his inclination for the Gaudiya or Chaitanyite philosophy the fact that in 1723 a treatise was commissioned by the Maharaja and written by Krishnadev Bhattacharya, a theologian affiliated with the Madanmohan temple in Vrindaban and "a recipient of many favors from the Maharaja."

traditional pilgrimage sites of Prayag, Hardwar, Gaya, Kurukshetra and Pushkar in order to bathe and perform rituals. While on the one hand clearly unwilling to tolerate particular transgressions among neo-Vaishnava and bhakti communities of what he viewed as traditional values and beliefs, on the other hand he could demonstrate the same kind of religious toleration generally exhibited by his Kachhwaha predecessors. Receipts show that he donated generously to the Dargah of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti in Ajmer (KD 326) and to the keepers of the tombs of other Muslim saints (KD 550). His ecumenism extended as well to his personal life. In his seminal biography of Sawai Jai Singh, V. S. Bhatnagar discusses at some length his lifelong friendship with, and his deep affection for, Khan-i-Dauran who was killed in battle against the forces of Nadir Shah in 1739 causing great sorrow to the Maharaja. "The two were close friends, tied together by warmest ties, sharing same tastes, and having the same outlook on various political issues" (1974, 248). His efforts to bar the recruitment of Muslims into nominally Hindu sects cannot be viewed as in any sense anti-Islamic. Rather they express his concern about maintaining a social separation between communities within particular public spheres, not only between Hindus and Muslims, but between Brahmins or Rajputs and *shudras* or other castes viewed as inferior. Yet there were other spheres....the courts and the military, for example....where such mixing was deemed appropriate. Far from attempting to construct a Vaishnava Hinduism in direct opposition to Islam, he hoped to construct a pure Vaishnavism based upon classical principles, free of doctrinal inconsistencies and adulterated practices, that could coexist with Islam.

Chapter Four

The Rise of Armed Ascetics in Eighteenth-Century North India

While it is accepted that armed bands of ascetics appeared among the Shaiva *sannyasis* prior to their appearance among nominally Vaishnava sects, the period in which they were organized remains open to speculation. Although there are traditions of earlier armed bands of yogis, the earliest recorded instance of such armed *sannyasis* is Emperor Akbar's reported observation of two groups of them fighting for supremacy of the pilgrim site at the Kumbha Mela in Hardwar in March, 1567 (Farquhar 1925, 443; Giri 1976, 60).[112] Farquhar (1925, 442) repeats the questionable sectarian story that about 1565, due to attacks upon *sannyasis* by armed *fakirs*, to whom "to kill those idolatrous infidels seemed to be the right thing to do," a leading *sannyasi* scholar approached Emperor Akbar seeking a solution.

Supposedly, Akbar's advisor Raja Birbal, who often figures in contemporary legendary stories and folk tales about the period, suggested that certain orders of *sannyasis* induct large numbers of non-Brahmin men who would then be able to protect the others. At that time, the Dasnami orders were in theory restricted to men of Brahmin caste who would have been more inclined towards scholarship than weaponry. The scholar Madhusudana Saraswati is supposed to have accepted the advice endorsed by the Emperor himself and to have encouraged the initiation of Kshatriya and Vaishya sadhus into seven of the ten Dasnami orders. Even today, Farquhar points out, those seven sub-orders are considered "impure" because they were no longer restricted to Brahmins.

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[112] Farquhar identifies the spot as "Thaneshwar, north of Delhi" and the competing groups as Shaiva Giris and Puris.

The *sannyasi* Swami Sadananda Giri writes that, although Shaiva sectarian sources indicate that the *akharas* were founded between 856 CE (the Anand Akhara) and 1749 CE (the Nirvani Akhara), his own opinion is that most of them had been gradually formed between the reigns of Akbar and Aurangzeb, with the Nirvani Akhara being the last to be formed. He suggests that there may well have been earlier organized wandering groups, some of whom may have been armed for protection, but that in terms of their military character the development was strictly during the Mughal period (Giri 1976, 22-23). As he goes on to say, "when the Nagas were organised they formed a quasi-military body, so military terms[113] were coined and it should be noticed that these terms were influenced by Muslim culture" (ibid., 24). The use of Islamicate military terminology would indeed seem to confirm that the principal period of initial formation came after a prolonged and widespread exposure to Muslim military culture.

One argument is that the *sannyasis* organized themselves along the lines of Muslim *fakirs* who, organized into armed *jama'ats*, had for centuries roamed North India militantly spreading the message of Islam while attacking Hindu sadhus and destroying temples. There is little solid evidence for this theory, which may indicate more about contemporary communal relations in India than about actual medieval social conditions. Although historian Richard M. Eaton originally advocated the view that armed Sufi *fakirs* were instrumental in the spread of Islam,[114] he has since recanted that opinion, due at least in part to Carl Ernst's (1992) evidence to the contrary. Certainly there were bands of Sufi *fakirs* traveling throughout North India who may have armed themselves at some point. For example, Dasgupta refers to a *sanad* issued in 1659 by Shah Shuja, the son of Aurangzeb who was at

[113] He refers to such terms as *ani* (army) and *jama'at* (band, group), common to all Naga bands regardless of their religious orientation.
[114] See Eaton 1983.

that time the Governor of Bengal, granting certain rights to Shah Sultan Muria Burhana, of the Madari order of Sufi *fakirs*, and his followers. According to the *sanad*, they were allowed to: 1) travel anywhere according to inclination, 2) confiscate property to which there is no heir, 3) be supplied with provisions by landholders and tenants, 4) be free of cesses, contributions or taxes (Dasgupta 1992, 27). It is easy to see how such rights could be abused, given the economic advantages available under the conditions of the document. It is also easy to see how there might have been contention among groups vying for those rights.

Yet Dasgupta believes that there was not always an antagonistic relationship between rival groups of *fakirs* and *sannyasis*, that there must have been a much more cooperative, give-and-take relationship between the Sufi *fakirs* and Dasnami sadhus based upon shared values and commonalities. He expresses the opinion that "a basic commonness had been taking shape between the Sufi Fakirs and Dasnami Sannyasis in matters of religion--not only in the outward appearance but also in the core of philosophical formulation and organizational functioning" (Dasgupta 1992, 19). He points to the similarities in organization that later contributed to the shaping of military-like discipline. The Dasnamis had ten orders based upon the *guru-shishya* relationship whereas the Sufis had numerous *silsilas* (lineages) based upon that of *pir-mureed*. In addition, he sees Indian Sufism as to some degree having assimilated the various indigenous influences of yoga, tantra and even bhakti. He points out that in some instances the Persian poetry of the *sama* (recitation) gatherings of the Sufis came to be displaced by "Hindawi poetry, with all its Shaiva and Vaishnava imagery" (ibid.), illustrating a kind of cultural fusion that was taking place on many levels of society.

While there is not sufficient evidence to determine whether the Dasnami bands of armed ascetics were formed for protection from similar bands of *fakirs* or for other reasons, Vaishnava sectarian sources are unanimous in stating that the Vaishnava armies (*ani)* were

organized for defense against those same Dasnamis. Even if the Dasnamis had been organized during the reign of Akbar, they did not become prominent until the mid-eighteenth century when one large band under the leadership of Rajendra Giri was engaged by Safdar Jang to fight in his employ. Prior to that, it appears that Rajendra Giri's armed Nagas had already been effectively organized for decades. Sarkar, relying on the account in the *Jhansi Gazetteer*, says that Rajendra Giri had lived for many years at Moth, 32 miles northeast of Jhansi, in Bundelkhand, where he had constructed a fort and controlled over one hundred villages. Feeling threatened by his power and prestige, the Marathas under the leadership of Naro Shankar had managed to expel him from the region in 1749-50 (Sarkar n.d., 126-127). It is possible that it was Rajendra Giri's band (or that of his predecessor) which was employed by the Jat leader Churaman in his rebellion. During the siege of the Jat stronghold of Thun by Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II in late 1716 CE, Churaman is said to have employed 12,000 professional *sannyasi* warriors in addition to Afghan mercenaries from Shahjahanpur and Bareilly whom he paid three rupees per day (Dwivedi 1989, 63). And, although he gives no date, Richard Burghart (1978, 126) says that sectarian bardic sources of the Ramanandis claim that in the early eighteenth century armed *sannyasis* encircled and captured Ayodhya on *Ram Navami*, the birthday of Ram, driving out the Ramanandi ascetics residing there. It is said to have been this loss of Ayodhya that provoked the leaders of the *catuh sampraday*, the four Vaishnava sects, to call a conference in the course of which they first organized themselves into military orders.

Following his expulsion from Bundelkhand, Rajendra Giri had wandered with his followers to Allahabad where he joined the army of Safdar Jang in early 1751, after aiding in the defense of the Allahabad fort from the rebelling Afghan Rohillas (Sarkar n.d., 126-127). At that time, Safdar Jang was the Emperor's *wazir*. In his war against the rebellious Rohillas,

he employed both Maratha and Jat armies, offering 15,000 rupees a day to the Jat army and 25,000 to the Marathas (Dwivedi 1989, 122-123). Rajendra Giri seems to have gained the confidence of Safdar Jang quite rapidly. The war against the Rohillas was suspended in the summer of 1751 due to the coming of the monsoon. Safdar Jang returned to the attack in Rohilkhand at the end of the monsoons, but was becoming impatient at the slow pace of the war. Finally, Rajendra Giri volunteered to attack the enemy entrenchments with his troops, but the Maratha general Jayappa Sindhia reportedly "treacherously passed on his plans to Ahmad Bangash and this largely contributed to the Gosain's defeat" (Dwivedi 1989, 124).

Rajendra Giri was later assigned to the post of *faujdar* at Saharanpur in September 1752, and was extremely successful in extracting revenues from the Afghans, Sayyids and other residents (Sarkar n.d., 138). In April, 1753 Safdar Jang had massed his army outside Delhi in the course of his own rebellion against the Mughal Emperor. Rajendra Giri joined him from Saharanpur and, on May 9, 1753, the Nagas and the Jats under Suraj Mal began the brutal sack of Delhi, entering and looting Lal Darwaza and other quarters of the city (Dwivedi 1989, 131; Pande 1970, 54; Sarkar n.d., 139). A month later, in June 1753, Rajendra Giri was wounded in the Battle of Tal Katora on the outskirts of Delhi and died the next day. Safdar Jang, who had come to rely heavily upon him, was so shocked that for a "full 10 days he remained completely inactive" (Dwivedi 1989, 133) and never really recovered his political or military momentum.

The ensuing half century may easily be termed the heyday of the Nagas, for Shaiva, Vaishnava, Dadupanthi, Niranjani and Sikh Nagas by the tens of thousands became involved as mercenaries in the widespread internecine warfare that dominated North Indian politics of the late eighteenth century. Dasgupta rightfully, albeit somewhat eulogistically, notes that

"the *astradhari*[115] Sannyasis were no ordinary mercenary soldiers....They rose to the position comparable with that of feudal chiefs and were recognised as such by the Nawab Wazir of Oudh and the Maratha leaders. They crucially participated in almost all the decisive battles of eastern and northern India during the second half of the eighteenth century..." (Dasgupta 1992, 22). None reached a position higher nor more influential than that of Rajendra Giri's successor, Anup Giri, who became known as "Raja" Himmat Bahadur. In historical accounts of the latter half of the eighteenth century there are here and there repeated references to his activities, but there is no complete account of his remarkable life. It is worthwhile, therefore, to describe his career as an example of the power and influence it was possible to attain at that time through leadership of armed, militant bands of ascetics.

The history of Himmat Bahadur, the Naga Maharaja

Upon Rajendra Giri's death, Umrao Giri and Anup Giri, his two chief disciples who were said to be brothers, assumed command of the contingent of mercenary *sannyasis*. In 1754, when Shuja-ud-daula succeeded his father, Safdar Jang, as *subedar* of Awadh he not only retained them, but kept them in his service for over twenty years. They became two of his three most powerful generals, and by 1760 they had a force of some 12,000 men (Barnett 1980, 56). They apparently held positions of extreme trust, for shortly after his accession to the *masnad* of Awadh they are credited with helping the youthful Shuja forcibly abduct a young Khatri girl whose charms had attracted him, a scandal that would have led to his overthrow if not for the last-minute intervention of his mother (Mohan 1997, 57). In 1768, when Captain Harper observed the army of Awadh, he described both brothers as commanders of 1000 horse who were "particularly in favor" with Shuja (Barnett 1980, 80).

[115] i.e., "weapons-bearing"

The armies of Awadh at that time were an especially clear example of the kind of composite culture that was developing within the military subculture. The principal generals were the two Giri brothers, said to be of Brahmin origins, and Murtaza Khan Bareech, who some twenty years later would face the Dadupanthi Nagas in the crucial Battle of Khatu which will be discussed in Chapter 5. Other important officers included the Rajputs Raghunath Singh and Parshad Singh (Mohan 1997, 67). When, in 1764, the deposed Nawab Mir Kasim of Bengal sought the help of Shuja in combating the English East India Company, he arrived with an enormous, and enormously diverse, army. In the ensuing battles of Panchpahari and Buxar his forces are said to have included Anup Giri in command of some 5000 "naked *gosains*," Inayat Khan in command of 3000 Rohillas, the European commander Sumroo[116] and a vast army consisting of "Qizilbashes, Turani Mughals, Pathans and Rajputs" (Dasgupta 1992, 20; Ghosh 1930, 16).

Although the Marathas had been substantially weakened by their loss at the Battle of Panipat in 1761, they maintained a degree of power until the complete defeat in 1766 of the combined Maratha and Sikh armies, in which the Sikhs were joined by Ram Kishan Mahant (whose sectarian affiliation is unknown, but who presumably was at the head of armed Vaishnava *vairagis)*, Umrao Giri with armed *gosains*, and Batta Nand Mahant with troops of *fakirs* (Ghosh 1930, 16).

It appears that for a considerable period of time *sannyasis* and *fakirs* had been settling in rural areas of Bengal, taking advantage of grants of land from the Mughal authorities or from local landlords, as well as confiscating land for which there was no heir (as referred to in Shah Shuja's *sanad* of 1659). The benefits to the landlords were twofold: not only did they have the prestige and satisfaction of performing a religious duty, but they also began to use

[116] Sumroo was an Alsatian named Walter Reinhardt, whose "swarthy look and sullen scowl earned for him the sobriquet of Sombre, corrupted into Sumroo" (Ghosh 1930, 16).

the armed renunciants to supplement their own forces in combating the aggression of rival landlords and chiefs (Dasgupta 1992, 23). For various reasons, these and other increasingly large wandering groups of armed mendicants began to become noticeable in the 1760s, particularly as they began more and more to attack property belonging to the British East India Company. The first reported notice of such bands of mendicant warriors occurred in December 1761 (Ghosh 1930), and for the next four decades the British in Bengal were preoccupied by what they characterized as "*sannyasi* and *fakir* raiders," seeing them as no more than mere bandits and marauders posing as mendicants. The "raiding" in the British view, or "rebellion" of oppressed peasants as A. N. Chandra views it, began in earnest with attacks upon East India Company properties in 1763 and ended with a final minor encounter with armed *fakirs* in 1800 CE (Chandra 1977, 169). The Company tried to restrict the rights granted by the Mughal authorities, particularly the right to travel freely on pilgrimage, especially since major incursions of *sannyasis* seemed to occur after the Kumbha Melas in Hardwar in 1772 and in Allahabad in 1775 (Chandra 1977, 24). By 1788 the Company officials were looking for a way to resume rent-free land which had been bestowed upon the *sannyasis* and *fakirs*, estimating an annual loss of revenue of one crore rupees (Dasgupta 1992, 33).

It is clear that, while the *gosain* army of Anup and Umrao Giri was responsible for some of the incursions into Bengal, they by no means accounted for all of them. There were other, possibly competing, groups of both *fakirs* and *sannyasis*, looting and extracting revenues through the use of force or, frequently, through the mere threat of it. The three major accounts[117] dealing with the *fakir* and *sannyasi* uprisings, while agreeing more or less on the historical facts, present three quite distinct theories as to their possible causes. An

[117] Dasgupta 1992; Chandra 1977; Ghosh 1930

examination of these theories is significant, because the period of approximately 1760-1818 witnessed the rise into prominence of armed ascetic groups throughout the North, from Bengal to Rajputana. Many of them, like those of Umrao and Anup Giri, served in a mercenary capacity for the increasingly fragmented powers competing for dominance. As we have seen, the Jats as early as 1716 and the Nawabs of Awadh since 1751 had employed Naga mercenaries, but it is only after 1761 that their numbers and influence seem to have multiplied rapidly.

Stewart Gordon hypothesizes that the Marathas were compelled to rely on mercenaries because few Marathas returned north with the Maratha chiefs when they attempted to reestablish their power north of the Narmada after their loss at the Battle of Panipat in 1761 (1994, 20). Their extensive use of mercenaries changed the overall nature of their army and of other armies as well, for it established a monetary basis for service and loyalty that demanded a constant new supply of cash. Other powers, emulating the Marathas, also began to augment their traditional land-based clan troops with mercenaries, leading to an escalation of the demand for cash since "mercenaries had to be paid virtually year-round and could not and would not be paid in small grants of land" (ibid.). At the same time, many men--particularly in eastern Rajasthan--who were traditionally engaged in agriculture and who were being uprooted from the land due to the devastation of the wars and the depredations of the various armies, began to search for other means of livelihood.

In *Sannyasi and Fakir Raiders in Bengal* (1930), Ghosh adheres to the view espoused at the time by the British that these were simply bandits and dacoits. Reading the contemporary British accounts, it is clear that their terminology is hopelessly non-specific; that is, they habitually confuse Hindu *sannyasis* with Muslim *fakirs*, apparently observing no profound differences between the two. In fact, many of the contemporary accounts,

particularly those of Europeans, use such terms as *fakir*, *sannyasi*, *gosain*, *vairagi*, and Naga rather indiscriminately.

Chandra attributes the growth of armed ascetic groups more directly to the political and economic conditions prevalent in Bengal, though by no means restricted to it. "Politically, the country was in disorder, socially, the country was disrupted owing to famine and other causes. Economically, the country was bankrupt" (1977, 19). The deteriorating political situation in Bengal and throughout the North is well chronicled. In Bengal, the amount of land revenues collected increased four-fold between 1763 and 1788 (Dasgupta 1992, 48) despite a famine in 1770-71 resulting from a lean harvest in 1768 and no rain in 1769 (Chandra 1977, 31). Although he argues that harsh economic conditions caused many poor villagers to join the roving bands of mendicants "having no other subsistence than to levy contributions upon the rich on pain of death" (ibid., 42), Chandra ultimately tries to view this phenomenon as part of a political "rebellion" against the British facilitated by the weak political situation during the period of transition from the administration of the Nawab to that of the East India Company. This, however, would not fully explain the presence of armed Nagas in other regions of the north.

Dasgupta (1992) sees the *sannyasis* and *fakirs* rather as having established ties with the rural population of Bengal through their trading, farming and other localized activities. Thus, when social and economic conditions worsened and the political situation became uncertain, they were the natural leaders to lead poor, oppressed peasants in an ostensibly political rebellion against the British.

It was earlier stated that Anup Giri remained in the employ of Shuja-ud-daula, the Nawab of Awadh, until the latter's death in 1775. Shuja was succeeded by Asaf-ud-daula who soon appointed Murtaza Khan, who had lost favor in the court of Shuja, to a high

position. Murtaza Khan began to alter many policies and facilitated negotiation of a treaty of defense with the East India Company, which bestowed upon it the responsibility for the security of Awadh's borders. These changes affected the morale of Awadh's standing army and in May, 1775 there was a mutiny in Etawah. Following another mutiny in the winter of 1775-76, Anup Giri withdrew with his Nagas to Agra where he enlisted in the service of Mirza Najaf Khan (Barnett 1980, 104-110). This was a tremendous loss to Awadh, for Anup Giri had commanded a substantial portion of Awadh's army and had farmed more than a third of its revenues (Barnett 1980, 111).

Anup Giri's younger brother, Umrao Giri, apparently had left the service of Awadh several years earlier and had entered the service of Jawahar Singh (1764-1768 CE), the Jat leader. Although his father, Suraj Mal, (1757-1763 CE) had not directly employed mercenaries, Jawahar Singh was obliged to employ hired Europeans, Marathas, Sikhs and *gosains* as a significant element of his army. In early 1767 Jawahar Singh was preparing to engage the Marathas in battle, but began to suspect Umrao Giri and his *gosains* of treachery. On February 3, 1767 he launched a surprise attack upon their encampment, plundering it. They fled to seek shelter with the Marathas, whereupon Jawahar Singh seized their property in Bharatpur (Pande 1970, 94-95). For several years after that, Umrao Giri apparently fought for the Marathas.

In early 1776 there erupted a dispute over the throne of the Jat state of Bharatpur. Ranjeet Singh, who was considered the rightful claimant to the throne, learned that the Rohilla chief Rahimad Khan had placed the infant Keshari Singh on the throne and proclaimed himself regent. Gathering together loyal Jat leaders and "hiring 2000 Maratha horses under Jaswant Rao Bable and some Naga monks, he made a secret night march to Deeg" where he ensconced himself in the fort (Pande 1970, 122). Najaf Khan set siege to the fort, but the siege dragged

on for an extended period. The Nagas employed by Ranjeet Singh, apparently Ramanandi or even Dadupanthi Nagas, made repeated sallies out of Deeg to cut off grain convoys meant for Najaf Khan's army, causing a scarcity of provisions. Additionally, Najaf Khan owed nine months' back salary to his troops. It was in the midst of these problems that Anup Giri joined him with 6000 mercenaries and 30 to 40 guns. He plundered surrounding areas and provided enough money to Najaf Khan that he was able to pay his troops. This allowed Najaf Khan to launch an all-out attack on the Naga mercenaries employed by Ranjeet Singh, defeating them after two intensive battles. Raja Ranjeet Singh and the remnant of his troops escaped on the night of April 29, 1776. Although Anup Giri had come to know of it and tried to intercept them, they succeeded in reaching the fort at Kumbher where they again entrenched themselves (Pande 1970, 126-127).

In April and May of 1776, Anup Giri (Himmat Bahadur) was involved with some 25,000 *gosain* troops in an unsuccessful plot abetted by Najaf Khan to assassinate Asaf-ud-daula and place his younger brother Sadat upon the throne of Awadh (Barnett 1980, 114-116). About this time (mid-1776), the Maratha chief Mahadaji Sindhia had retired to Poona due to struggles over the Peshwaship and the first Maratha conflict with the British. Najaf Khan, at that time a new agent for Emperor Shah Alam II, used his absence to try to reestablish Mughal control over various territories that had been controlled by the Maratha general Sindhia. Gosain Raja Anup Giri, now known more commonly as "Raja" or "Maharaja" Himmat Bahadur, became a leading military chief as well as an important negotiator in his service.

When Najaf Khan besieged his former ally Rao Raja Pratap Singh Naruka of Macheri (later Alwar) in May 1778, Anup Giri and his brother, who apparently was then also in the service of Najaf Khan, were sent to meet and negotiate with the Rao Raja. Pratap Singh had

captured the fort of Lacchmangarh from the Jats, but soon found himself surrounded there by the Mughal forces of Najaf Khan and had to negotiate his way out (Nagori 1982, 67). The Jaipur *darbar* had convinced the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam to march on Lacchmangarh to relieve the siege, but he had turned back to Delhi before reaching it, apparently swayed by a contrary opinion. The Rao Raja was compelled to sue for peace and negotiated a settlement of 33 lakh rupees payable over the next three years. In July he paid 3 lakhs, whereupon Najaf Khan returned to Agra leaving Himmat Bahadur behind in charge of negotiations (Tikkiwal 1974, 145 ff).

In 1781, when none of the tribute due from Jaipur had been realized for more than a year, despite negotiations by Himmat Bahadur, Najaf Khan determined to attack Jaipur if it was not forthcoming. When his army partially dispersed due to lack of pay, Najaf Khan again entrusted Himmat Bahadur with the responsibility of collecting it. Negotiating with the Jaipur *diwan*, Khushali Ram Bohra, the *sannyasi* came to an agreement on April 28, 1781 according to which he was given 75,000 rupees and '*mahals*' yielding 12 lakhs a year (Saxena 1973, 98). Most of this was forwarded to Najaf Khan, but some was kept to be spent on the Mughal and Naga forces. In an undated *ahadnama* (contract) from this period located in the Kapad Dwara collection of Jaipur, Najaf Khan swears friendship with Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh of Jaipur and Vijay Singh of Marwar, agrees to have no relations with Rao Raja Pratap Singh of Macheri, and offers to hand over the *pargana* of Kotputali to Jaipur. "I have made this agreement in the name of the almighty and his Prophet," he writes. "I shall settle the terms with Raja Himmat Bahadur..." (Bahura 1988, 346).

Later, when Himmat Bahadur's own *jagir* was seized by Muhammad Beg Hamdani's lieutenant, Murtaza Khan, he came to Jaipur to request help. The Jaipur *darbar* received him with hospitality, listened to his plea and provided him with 5000 *sawars* (cavalrymen) as

well as certain grants for his maintenance (Tikkiwal 1974, 157). He had apparently been developing a close relationship with Jaipur for some time. Tikkiwal notes that while leading a Mughal force along with Mahboob Ali to attack Jaipur in 1779 or 1780, Himmat Bahadur, being 'inimical' to Mahboob Ali, kept going behind his back to negotiate with and provide vital information to Jaipur (ibid., 153).

After the death of Najaf Khan in April 1782, Himmat Bahadur had been responsible for introducing the Maratha general Mahadaji Sindhia into Delhi politics,[118] often acting as his agent in various political intrigues (Spear 1993, 20-24), effecting through his political acumen the peaceful transfer of the *subedari* of Delhi to Sindhia's lieutenants and securing a *rapprochement* with the Sikh leaders. Sarkar relates that during the period of about November, 1784 to March, 1785 the *gosain* was at his political peak, acting as the de facto *bakshi* of the empire and holding estates yielding an annual income of ten to twelve lakhs (Sarkar n.d., 225-227).

But Sindhia developed an active mistrust of Himmat Bahadur, having some of his *jagirs* confiscated in May, 1785 and accusing him of treason in January, 1786 (ibid, 229-230). When more *jagirs* were confiscated in February, Umrao Giri (quickly joined by his brother) raised a revolt in the Doab which compelled Sindhia to withdraw an intended attack upon Jaipur for the purpose of overthrowing Sawai Pratap Singh and placing his own nominee, the Maharaja's nephew Man Singh, on the throne (ibid., 233-235). Himmat Bahadur and Umrao Giri spent much of the next year in protracted correspondence with the Sikhs, the British and numerous regional chieftains, concocting a diplomatic scheme to withdraw all support from Sindhia. They even tried to get the Rajputs to use their influence to help depose Sindhia from his position in Delhi. It was a scheme that bore fruit, directly contributing to Sindhia's

[118] Much of the following discussion of the "*gosavi*" or "*gosain*" episode and its consequences follows Acharya 1978, 339-369, and Misra 1981, 102 ff.

dramatic loss at the Battle of Lalsot (1787) in which Sindhia, abandoned at the last moment by his allies, was defeated and forced to flee by the Jaipur army of Sawai Pratap Singh, which included many Dadupanthi Nagas.

Later that year Jaipur wanted to send a force of several thousand under Nand Ram Haldia and Himmat Bahadur against Sindhia to compel him to retreat beyond the Chambal River. Himmat Bahadur, again accompanied by Umrao Giri, collected a force and was prepared to attack and ransack land possessed by Sindhia, but they were hampered by political opposition. Disappointed, Himmat Bahadur left for Aligarh where he is supposed to have served under the banner of Gulam Kadir for some time (Tikkiwal 1974, 172). Gulam Kadir joined forces with the Rohilla Ismail Beg in defeating a combined Jat and Maratha force near Bharatpur in April 1788. In July they captured and deposed the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam (Spear 1993, 27), but there is no reference to Himmat Bahadur's participation in either event. However, in February, 1788 he showed up between Jaipur and Delhi at negotiations between Emperor Shah Alam and Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh regarding arrangements for the payment of further tribute by Jaipur (Tikkiwal 1974, 174).

In 1789, Himmat Bahadur returned to Sindhia and stayed in his camp at Mathura, where he was assigned a *saranjam* (expenses for necessary supplies) of two lakhs of rupees. Sindhia suffered a prolonged illness from March to August of that year which his physicians were unable to diagnose. It came to be regarded as the result of witchcraft and suspicion fell on Himmat Bahadur, who was accused of trying to kill Sindhia (Acharya 1978, 340),[119] a charge that was not without some foundation (Saxena 1973, 118-119). It is worth noting that Jayappa Sindhia had been assassinated in 1755 by Bijay Bharati, a Dasnami *sannyasi* who had been sent as an emissary of Maharaja Vijay Singh of Marwar for negotiations (Misra

[119] This is indicative of the fearful regard in which Himmat Bahadur must have been held.

1981, 34).

On July 21, while being led under escort to Sindhia's tent, Himmat Bahadur escaped to the tent of his supporter Ali Bahadur and took refuge under the flag of the Peshwa. This is when the real trouble began. Sindhia demanded the surrender of the fugitive, while Ali Bahadur, as the representative of the Peshwa, refused to revoke his asylum.

Tukoji Holkar and other Maratha leaders, not convinced of Himmat Bahadur's guilt, sided with Ali Bahadur, a position that caused Sindhia to begin to distrust them and believe them to be his enemies. Mahadaji's *vakil* in Poona repeatedly wrote that the Peshwa was displeased by the quarrel, and Ali Bahadur kept trying to get him to settle the matter. In February 1790, Sindhia finally visited Ali Bahadur's tent, called for Himmat Bahadur and pardoned him, but the ill feelings generated by the episode seem to have lingered on (Acharya 1978, 347). Later on, Ali Bahadur and Tukoji Holkar withdrew their troops at a critical juncture, forcing Sindhia to negotiate settlements with Jodhpur and Jaipur from a position of weakness. Ali Bahadur wanted to resolve the continuing conflict with Sindhia, but the latter showed little interest. Acharya asserts that one reason for Sindhia's intransigence was that he knew that a compromise with Ali Bahadur would obligate him to pay more than 50 lakhs of rupees that were owed to him for previous expenses (Acharya 1978, 368-369). The episode dragged on for two years until a broke and a disgusted Ali Bahadur left for Bundelkhand in August, 1791. It spoiled the relations between the Maratha leaders, especially between Holkar and Sindhia, and "to a great extent shaped the later developments in Rajasthan" (Acharya 1978, 341).

Himmat Bahadur continued to be a significant figure in the military and political affairs of North India for another dozen years. He was very likely among the "Gosavis and

vairagis"[120] with Tukoji Holkar in his conflict with Sindhia at the Battle of Lakheri on June 1, 1793. Holkar's troops were fighting all day in the hot Rajasthani sun without any supply of water, although it was being supplied to Sindhia's forces. The battle was lost when the Nagas and even the Deccani cavalry finally ran away, leaving Sindhia victorious and effectively ending the rivalry between him and Holkar (Acharya 1978, 396).

Documents from the Kapad Dwara archives of the Jaipur Maharajas indicate that in 1796 Himmat Bahadur was exchanging sometimes coded letters with Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh and other nobles of Jaipur state (Bahura 1988). There is one letter (KD 1032) dated October 23, 1796 from Rao Shambhu Singh Gogawat and Mehta Malukchand addressed to "Gosain Raja Himmat Bahadur Anup Giri" in which the writers merely state that nothing has been heard from the *gosain* in some time, but that they are sending a personal message with the "gentlemen" carrying the letter. An undated return letter (KD 657) from "Mahant Anup Giri Himmat Bahadur" to Shambhu Singh acknowledges receipt of an earlier letter, expresses a willingness to act according to Shambhu Singh's wishes, and notes that "none of the horses sent (by you) was worth riding." In addition, there are two coded, metaphorical letters from Sawai Pratap Singh to the *gosain* chief (KD 1033 and 1049) and a similar letter of response (KD 1500), all from late 1796. An undated document in the possession of the descendants of the Jaipur *diwan* Daulat Ram Haldia is a *parwana* that indicates that Himmat Bahadur even considered the Jaipur ministers to be his private emissaries. He writes that he has learned that the Emperor has left for Calcutta where matters of great political and financial importance will be discussed. He suggests that Jaipur's Bakshi Nand Ram should be sent in the company of Kunwar Ram Lal to meet the Emperor en route and secure from him a grant of 15 or 20

[120] It appears that by this time it was not unusual to have Shaiva *sannyasis* and Vaishnava *vairagis* fighting as mercenaries within the same army, although more often than not they fought against each other.

mahals such as Koil (Aligarh) and Firozabad as *jaidad* for himself (Himmat Bahadur). They should try to achieve all of his ambitions and aims. If necessary, they should take advantage of assistance from John Bristow, Raja Debi Singh and Raja Khushal Chand (to whom he had already written) in order to achieve his objectives (Mishra 1991, 165).

Himmat Bahadur apparently continued for the next several years to be active in aligning himself with whomsoever had political power. According to Sarkar, sometime in the late eighteenth century he raised troops for Ali Bahadur who granted him a *jagir* in Bundelkhand after having established himself as Nawab of Banda in that region. Ali Bahadur died in 1802, and in 1803 his son and heir, Shamsher Bahadur, fought against the British in the Anglo-Maratha War. In the war, Himmat Bahadur cunningly offered his services and his troops to the British, aiding Colonel Powell in forcing the Marathas out of Bundelkhand[121] and in the defeat of Shamsher whose territories came under British domination. When the British District of Bundelkhand was formed in 1803, a part was granted by the British to "our ally, Himmat Bahadur, as the price of his allegiance" (1908, 174). He is said to have died in 1804, at which time his *jagir* reverted to British control. Sources thus locate the eventful lifespan of Himmat Bahadur/Anup Giri, the Naga *sannyasi* military leader and arguably one of the most powerful and influential figures of his time, from 1730-1804 CE (van der Veer 1997, 151).

However, his followers seem to have remained active for some time, for in 1809 Thomas Broughton, a European in the service of Sindhia, reported seeing a band of 1500 *gosain* horsemen who entered the Maratha camp led by Kumpta Gir, described as a second-generation disciple of Himmat Bahadur. It is not clear that there had necessarily been a succession upon Himmat Bahadur's death, for Orr notes that many *gosain* warriors had

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[121] See Burgess 1972.

remained in Sindhia's service even after the breach between the two (Orr 1940, 91), and the pattern among Dadupanthi and Ramanandi Nagas was for disciples to branch off and establish their own *akharas*. The passage from one of Broughton's letters is worth quoting in its entirety for its historical and ethnographic detail.

"The army has received a considerable reinforcement, since my last letter, by the arrival of a body of Gosaeens under Kumpta Gir. This chief succeeded to the command of the corps, which consists of nearly 1,500 men, chiefly horse, upon the death of Ram Gir, who died about a month ago. They were both *Chelas*, or disciples, of Kunchun Gir, the Chela of Himmat Bahadoor, a celebrated Gosaeen in the service of Shumsheer Bahadoor, one of the Chiefs of Boondelkund. The Gosaeens are a religious order of Hindoo mendicants who attach themselves to the service of particular chiefs; and frequently, as in the case of Himmat Bahadoor, amass great wealth, and raise themselves into consequence. They then adopt Chelas; and are themselves styled *Gooroos*, or teachers. Upon the death of the Gooroo, the eldest Chela succeeds to his honours; and after him, the others, according to the dates of their adoption, before the Chelas of the second Gooroo. When they become numerous and wealthy, and enroll themselves as a military band in the service of some Prince, their leader is termed *Muhunt*: they then retain but little of their original manner and appearance, distinguishing themselves alone by the *jutta*, or long matted hair folded like a turban on the head, and having some portion of their dress dyed a kind of orange colour, called *Geroo*, peculiar to their sect. As soldiers, they are accounted brave and faithful; and they are the only *Hindoos* who bury their dead. When one of the order dies, he is interred in a sitting posture, with his staff and *tombree*, a small kind of calabash, the emblems of his mendicity, placed before him in the grave; and if the band be rich enough, a small monument is erected to mark the spot" (Broughton 1977, 88-89).

With his experience largely limited to military camps, it is not surprising that Broughton would understand *gosains* to be strictly military in nature. Yet his observations regarding the lines of succession and the terminology among Nagas are quite correct. In particular, in all such sectarian monastic communities the difference between a mere guru and mahant seems to be that the mahant is a man of property. Certainly in the Dadu Panth, the term mahant does not necessarily have any connotation of saintliness or spiritual attainment; rather it indicates an ascetic who has established an abode on a piece of property owned by him. Even when the Dadupanthi Nagas at their height were constantly on the move, the

mahants were always *mahants* of a particular *thambha*, i.e., an establishment or an established place. Deeds to property received from royal patrons were generally not made out in the name of individuals, but were made out to the "mahant" of such-and-such a place. In this way, whoever succeeded to the title of mahant would become the *de facto* owner and supervisor of the property, and the property itself remains intact.[122]

The origins of Vaishnava Nagas

All sources agree that the Vaishnava Nagas were organized in the eighteenth century, although most express uncertainty about the date and the circumstances. It is clear that at least some groups of religious mendicants were traveling in armed groups for a considerable period prior to the eighteenth century, but these seem to have been loosely organized and not yet institutionalized. The organization of the Sikh Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699 would have been among the earliest of such processes of institutionalization among non-Shaiva communities, although even that event has been mythologized.

Conflict between the Vaishnava sects, the so-called *chatuh sampraday* or four communities, and already armed Dasnami Nagas is often given as the instrumental cause of the arming of a portion of the Vaishnava community, especially the Ramanandis. Richard Burghart (1978, 126) posits an inherent pattern of competition between various Hindu sects for access to three vital resources: "devotees and disciples, pilgrimage routes and pilgrimage centers, and political patronage." He sees the accounts of "yogic battles" for ascendancy as representative of the more worldly military battles which must have occurred between representatives of various sects. Certainly there may well have been more involved in these battles than just the display of magical or yogic power. According to Ramanandi accounts, as

[122] This explanation was offered to me by Swami Gopaldas of Naraina.

well as those of the bards of Jaipur, when Krishnadas Payahari defeated the Gorakhnathi ascetic Taranath in such a yogic battle at Galta, near present-day Jaipur, in the early sixteenth century, the latter was driven from Jaipur and Krishnadas established the Ramanandi *gaddi* at Galta and became the spiritual preceptor to Raja Prithviraj of Amber. This legend accounts for the relative absence of Naths and other Shaiva sects from Jaipur in the ensuing centuries as well as the well-recorded influence of the Galta *mahants* upon the Maharajas of Amber and Jaipur. Whether the battles which took place were armed, yogic, or merely ideological is not discernible and ultimately not of direct relevance to the present discussion. But the legends do illustrate the types of often bitter inter-sectarian competition for royal patronage and other resources that characterized much of the late medieval period.

The Ramanandis, in particular, having tapped a previously unexploited resource ignored by other sects--namely, Shudras, untouchables, women and former Hindus who had been converted to Islam--through their policy of inclusion, presented the greatest potential threat to the supremacy of other sects. The Naths and Dasnamis would have been the more established sects that would face the threat of displacement by a growing Ramanandi movement. For this reason, Richard Burghart and others cite the capture of Ayodhya as the instrumental cause that led directly to military organization among the Vaishnavas. Relying on bardic sources, he says (1978, 130) that the "loss of Ayodhya" provoked the Vaishnava leaders to call a conference at Galta, near the present-day city of Jaipur, and that the *akharas* (militant bands) and *anis* (armies) of the Vaishnava sects date from that time.

Burghart seems to believe that this occurred very early in the century, possibly confusing a number of later conferences held at Galta with the conference of 1713 held at Vrindaban, which sectarian sources claim to have been the first assembly at which the organization of a military society was discussed (Mital 1968, 358; Simha 1957, 380-381).

Nonetheless, it appears that this proposed organization was an attempt to institutionalize what had been the *de facto* situation for some time. But Mital goes on to say that no decision was formulated at that conference due to differences of opinion between the worshipers of Ram and those of Krishna. While the devotees of Krishna may have begun to fear Shaiva depredations in and around Vrindaban, it seems unlikely that they would have been overtly concerned with the loss of the Ramaite center of Ayodhya. It was in order to resolve their differences of opinion, Mital writes, that Swami Balanand, the mahant of the Ramanandi *gaddi* of Jaipur, in cooperation with Vrindaban Dev, the mahant of the Nimbark *gaddi* of Parashuram Dwara, and under the aegis of Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II of Amer, organized a conference that took place in Brahmapuri, also called Ganeshwar, near present-day Jaipur in 1734.[123] He adds that it is unclear whether the Brahmapuri conference was headed by Balanand or by Vrindaban Dev, although the majority opinion is that the latter headed a separate, later conference held at Neem ka Thana in the same year (Mital 1968, 358-359; Thiel-Horstmann 1985). In between there had been another conference called by Sawai Jai Singh at Amer in 1723 (VS 1780) specifically to consider the question of the regulation of membership in the *catuh sampraday* (Mital 1968, 340).

Mital presents a somewhat more complex set of issues that led to the institution of a military branch than either Burghart or Orr, who asserts that it was the brutal murder by Dasnami *sannyasis* of a traveling Ramanandi leader which led Balanand to weld the four *sampradays* into "a strong confederacy which for the first time was able to meet the Dasnamis on something like equal terms" (Orr 1940, 89). Mital claims that it was the attacks and harassment by the Mughals under Aurangzeb, exacerbated by attacks upon the Vaishnavas by sects such as Shaktas, Shaivas (including Dasnamis), Yogis and Smartas. It

[123] The severity and extent of their differences is evidenced by the fact that it took twenty-one years to convene another conference!

was in these circumstances that the Vaishnavas felt compelled to set aside their mutual differences and disagreements in order to band together and establish a military society for their own protection. In this scenario, it was not necessarily a sudden decision resulting from one vicious assault, but rather an opinion that developed over decades of harassment from various quarters that finally coalesced in the decade or so after Aurangzeb's death. In the same vein, Bakker (1986, 149) views the anarchic political situation and lack of centralized authority that prevailed after Aurangzeb's death as providing the circumstances which allowed the *sannyasis* and *vairagis* to begin to engage in large-scale battles in contested pilgrimage sites such as Ayodhya.

No doubt the primary culprits were considered to be Dasnamis, for they are the ones most frequently demonized in Vaishnava oral traditions that continue to be repeated by many sources. These stories always concern two Dasnami Naga leaders, Lakshman Giri and Bhairava Giri, who are said to have either "taken a vow to kill at least five Vaishnavas every day before taking meals" (Sinha 1978, 122), or to have been constitutionally unable to eat breakfast prior to killing a certain number (usually said to have been one, three or five) of Vaishnavas. This story was frequently recited to me by Dadupanthi Nagas as an explanation of the circumstances that led to the formation of Vaishnava and later Dadupanthi *akharas*. According to these accounts, the Vaishnavas--who are commonly depicted as somehow incapable of defending themselves--had called upon Dadupanthi Nagas to protect them from these vicious attacks by Shaiva *sannyasis*. This tale of the Dadupanthi Nagas, while apparently contradicting the evidence that Ramanandi Nagas were organized at least twenty years earlier than them,[124] nonetheless points to an early cooperative nexus between

[124] Narendra Singh (1939, 23) expresses the belief that the Dadupanthi Nagas were originally employed in the Jaipur infantry during the reign of Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II, though there is no corroborating evidence.

acknowledged Vaishnava sects and the Dadupanthi Nagas in their formative stage.

The question of when the Vaishnavas became organized into military orders is of considerable significance in considering the organization of the Dadupanthi Nagas. As will be discussed in detail, Dadupanthi sectarian sources indicate that Dadupanthis sadhus in the line of Haridas and Shyamdas, both members of the royal family of Amer, had always insisted upon maintaining outward signs of their Rajput warrior heritage, so that a militant spirit and the bearing of arms were seen to have been part and parcel of their Dadupanthi identities. But, according to these same sectarian sources, it was not until another conference of ascetics at Galta in *Samvat* 1812 (1755 CE) that military orders were formally established among the Dadupanthis.[125] Orr, without referring to any particular source, says that the Dadupanthis at first fought alongside the Ramanandis and only later, when they became powerful enough to maintain their own armies, did they set up independent *akharas*, albeit on the Vaishnava *vairagi* model (Orr 1940, 93). This would explain the somewhat later date of formation attributed to the Dadu Panth as well as the somewhat close relationship between Dadupanthi Nagas and certain *akharas* of Ramanandi *vairagis*.

For example, in one chart Sinha and Saraswati (1978, 123) diagram the organization of Vaishnava ascetics into 3 *anis:* Nirmohi, Digambara and Nirvani. These are further subdivided into 52 *dwaras* and 8 *akharas*, with 9 distinct sections belonging to the Nirmohi Ani. Yet in another diagram (p. 156) showing the arrangement of Vaishnava *akharas* in the Kumbha Mela procession,[126] there are 11 sections shown to be marching with the Nirmohi Ani. Marching in the rear, that is, in the third row, of the Nirmohi Ani are the Dudhadari Nirmohi Nagas and

[125] See Mangaldas' *Sundaroday.*

[126] The diagram specifically refers to the 1967 Kumbha Mela at Hardwar, but the pattern of the procession is traditional and presumably applicable to other Kumbha Melas. Although from year to year one or another *ani* may take precedence, the order of the sections within each *ani* is said to be fixed.

the Dadupanthi Nagas. It thus appears that there must have existed at one time a connection between the Dadupanthis and the Nirmohis. It is not insignificant that the founder of the Nirmohi Ani is regarded to be Govind Das, who left Jaipur to settle in Ayodhya sometime in the first half of the eighteenth century (Simha 1957, 134; Srivastav 1957, 228).

Returning to the question of the organization of the Vaishnava Nagas, there seem to have been in the first half of the eighteenth century a series of conferences of the four Vaishnava *sampradays*--traditionally considered to be the Madhavas, the Vallabhacharyas, the Nimbarks, and the Ramanujis, also known as the Sri Sampraday[127]--in which they were more definitively organized. Krishnadas Payahari, his guru Anantanand and even Ramanand were considered to belong to the latter, the Sri Sampraday, whose adherents directed their devotion to Ram as an incarnation of Vishnu. The other three communities were known as devotees of the incarnate form of Krishna. Until the seventeenth century, devotees of Ram would have belonged to the Sri Sampraday if they belonged to any specific religious order at all. Exclusive devotion to Ram gained widespread popularity and became increasingly important, especially following the dissemination of the *Ramcaritmanas* completed by Tulsidas in 1574 CE. As Bakker points out, as a consequence of this increasing significance of devotion to Ram and "the emphasis on his *puja* exclusive of the worship of other forms or incarnations, schisms in the traditional sects were finally inevitable" (1986, 147). But the Vaishnava community at that time was hardly a unified movement, consisting as it did of a broad spectrum of communities devoted either to Ram or to Krishna (or both) and extremely diverse in their beliefs and practices. It arguably included the non-conformist, even radical, traditions of Kabir and Raidas, who both were considered to be disciples of Ramanand; it

[127] Although these four are traditionally considered to be the four elements composing Vaishnavas *per se*, there were in fact a number of new communities being established from the 15th century on, indicating a greater fluidity and openness in the Vaishnava faith than implied by the concept of the four *sampradays*.

included as well groups conforming to more traditional values. Simha (Simha 1957, 61-67), in his analysis of the origins and development of the Ramavat community (i.e., the sectarian community of Vaishnavas devoted to Ram) sees a historical division into three distinct eras: the Alvar period of South Indian bhakti (700-1100 CE); the Acharya period which saw the rise of Ramanuja, Madhava and other founders of the four Vaishnava *sampradays* (1100-1400 CE); and the Ramavat period (1400 CE-present) which saw the spread of Krishna bhakti in the North and the growth of the cult of the worship of Ram.

A vital new aspect of Vaishnava bhakti that appeared around the middle of the sixteenth century was *rasik* or *madhurya bhakti*, which largely developed in the Gaudiya Sampraday in the Braj region around Vrindaban but affected other communities as well, including the Sri Sampraday. Bakker (1986, 139) explains that

> generally speaking Rama *bhakti* remained more orthodox and puritan, and in the period when the *rasa*-theory developed by Rupa Goswami found general recognition Rama *bhakti* was mostly conceived of as typifying *dasya-rasa*, or the sentiment of service exemplified by Hanumat. But *madhurya-bhakti*, in which the devotee cultivates erotic sentiments, also evolved within Ramaite devotion during the second half of the 16th century as is attested by the *Dhyanamanjari* of Agradas,[128] who established his own monastic community, the Raivasa *gaddi* near Jaipur in the last half of the 16th century.

The center of this new movement within the Sri Sampraday of Ramanuja was Rajputana, "a land that was protected from Muslim intimidation" (Simha 1957, 328), more particularly Amer state and its immediate vicinity. The principal seats of these "*rasik*" Ramanandis were Galta, Revasa and later the Balanand *gaddi* in Jaipur, all of which were founded by sadhus in the lineages of either Sursuranand or Anantanand, both direct disciples of Ramanand. Later, whenever political circumstances beyond Amer allowed it, their

[128] The disciple of Krishnadas Payahari, the founder of the Galta *gaddi*.

followers would spread out to various parts of India to spread their message so that eventually branches of all the principal seats of Ram bhakti in Rajasthan were established in other regions, creating an extensive community of these "Ramanandi" Vaishnavas throughout North India. Of the 52 Vaishnava Dwaras, 36 were eventually controlled by these Ramanandis. Of these 36 sacred centers of the Ramanandis, 15 were founded by Agradas or his followers, although the Galta *gaddi* of Krishnadas Payahari and his successor Kilh is considered to be the foundation from which all others arose (Simha 1957, 332). Today Ayodhya is considered the center of Ramanandi power and activity, but all of the Ramanandi *gaddis* of Ayodhya were established either in the eighteenth or nineteenth century, much later than the Rajasthani centers (Simha 1957, 336 ff.).

At some point, the Ramanandis became the dominant faction of the Sri Sampraday of Ramanuja and began to assert an alternative ideology. William Pinch (Pinch 1996a, 53-54) connects the "first major ideological transformation in the Ramanandi *sampraday*" with Priyadas' composition in 1712 of *Bhaktirasbodhinitika*, the first important commentary upon the *Bhaktamal* of Nabhadas, in which he greatly expanded upon Nabhadas' work by including numerous popular miraculous legends concerning Kabir, Raidas, Mirabai, Ramanand and others. Pinch further associates this transformation with the conference called to discuss the organization of armed defense against Shaiva depredations, writing that the secondary agenda of the conference was "the elevation of Ramanand to a level equal to that of Ramanuja," and that it involved the simultaneous exclusion of the non-twice-born disciples of Ramanand (such as Kabir and Raidas) from the list of legitimate transmitters of the tradition, in essence relegating the devotees of these excluded disciples to a position outside the newly constructed boundaries of what constituted the Ramanandi *sampraday*. Relying upon Burghart (1978), he places these events at Galta, during the conference called by Maharaja

Sawai Jai Singh II. Yet, as has been discussed, it was more probable that the discussion revolving around the creation of defensive forces took place at the first recorded conference of the *catuh sampraday* which was held in Vrindaban in 1713 CE. Only subsequently were conferences held at Galta and other localities near the Kacchwaha capital of Amer (and later Sawai Jaipur) under the auspices of the Maharaja, and it seems that they would have been the more appropriate venue for presenting a revised Ramanandi ideological position which rejected the more virulent anticaste pronouncements of the followers of Kabir and adhered to Sawai Jai Singh's intent to establish a separation of castes within each ascetic community. There is no tradition of Sawai Jai Singh's direct association with the first conference in Vrindaban, although he may have been temporarily assigned the *faujdari* of Mathura at the time of the conference.[129] However, he became intimately involved in the religious matters of Vrindaban and Mathura after having been appointed *faujdar* in 1722, and one of his major concerns was the initiation of Shudras into ascetic orders which also included twice-born castes. At the later conferences the Ramanandis would have been able to maintain the approval of the Maharaja by publicly rejecting the more staunch supporters of caste equality while vowing to remain affiliated with the more orthodox, and thus acceptable, organization of the Sri Sampraday. Burghart (1978) and Pinch (1996a, 54) argue that after the conference, whenever it may have occurred, the Ramanandis adopted a much more "ambiguous ideological position" in which they both recognized the caste origins of ascetics but also chose to de-emphasize it.

Mahant Balanand

Although sectarian sources are in agreement that Balanand of Jaipur was responsible

[129] Se previous chapter and Bhattacharya 1993, 57.

for the organization and institution of the *vairagi* Nagas, more specifically the Ramanandi Nagas, little else is known about him. Orr refers to him as a "Rajput from the Delhi district" (Orr 1940, 88) and A.K. Roy (1978, 192) says that the local tradition maintained by the successors of Balanand is that both he and his guru, "Brijananda or Virajanand," were invited to come to Jaipur from Delhi by Sawai Jai Singh. However, based upon sectarian sources (Mital quotes an undated pamphlet entitled "*Ram dal ki Vijay-Sri*"), Mital (1968) and Simha (1957) agree that Balanand was born in a Rajasthani village in *Samvat* 1710 (1653 CE), that his guru was Virajanand, that he was initiated as a boy and later became the *acharya* or *mahant* of the *gaddi* established by Anbhayanand, a fifth-generation disciple of Swami Ramanand's disciple Sursuranand. Balanand himself was a sixth-generation disciple of Anbhayanand. He is regarded as having called the conference in Vrindaban in 1713,[130] indicating that he already must have achieved some renown in the Vaishnava community. If Simha is correct in his statement (1957, 389) that Balanand began to engage in armed clashes with Dasnami sadhus at the age of 19, i.e., about 1672, then at the time of the 1713 conference he had already been engaged in armed conflict with Dasnamis for some 40 years. There are several sources which assert that, prior to organizing the Vaishnava Nagas, Balanand had initiated the Jaipur army and sent them to fight against the Dasnamis; it was following this example that he subsequently organized sadhus themselves into armed bands.[131] He is further supposed to have presided over the Brahmapuri conference of 1734 in which it appears that the Vaishnava Nagas may finally have been officially recognized, and would have been involved as well in the Galta conference of 1755 in which the Dadupanthi Nagas

[130] This date was initially offered by Ghurye (1953, 202-203) on the basis of an unidentified Jaipur chronicle. Others have subsequently referred to the date, but Roy (1978, 192) suggests that he may have been mistaken.

[131] See Singh 1939 and Srivastav 1957. Srivastav's assertion that Balanand "gave a *sadhu-mantra* to the Jaipur Maharaja's entire army and sent them off to fight against these troublemakers" (1957, 227), meaning Dasnamis as well as temple-destroying Mughals, does not seem entirely plausible.

are said to have been formally organized. In addition, he is personally credited with establishing the *dwaras* and *akharas* where training in arms was conducted, although it is not clear when this process of training began, even informally.

The Ramanandi *gaddi* of Jaipur became known as the *gaddi* of Balanand (*Balanand ki gaddi*), by which it is still known today, due to his prominence. Located on a small hillock in the northwestern part of the city, the *math* and temple were only built in 1753 CE, indicating that it may have only been at that time that Balanand began to achieve recognition (Roy 1978, 191). Later, four branches of the *gaddi* were established in Ayodhya, Gaya, Mt. Abu and Tirupati, indicating the wide dissemination of Balanand's influence and ideas. The Balanand *gaddi* is considered to be one of the six most important Ramanandi centers (three of them in Jaipur state), along with Galta, Revasa, Dakor, the *gaddi* of Kuba Ji and that of Tila (Srivastav 1957, 203). Balanand is said to have been acknowledged as the leading *acharya* of the four *sampradays* (Simha 1957, 389) and to have been considered an avatar of Hanuman because of the way he uplifted the Vaishnavas (ibid., 121). In fact, it is said that Hanuman was the *ishta-devata* of Balanand, and that he would lead his troops into battle bearing the *dhvaja* (banner) of Hanuman (Sharma 1996, 166), a practice later adopted by Dadupanthi Nagas.

Although Balanand is considered to have been an influential figure even after 1755, very little is recorded about him. In his history of Jaipur, Roy (1978, 172) refers to Sawai Madho Singh as "the only ruler of Jaipur who had a *guru*," that is, Balanand. Sarkar (n.d., 235), too, refers to him as the guru of Sawai Madho Singh and later Sawai Pratap Singh, although he provides no source. One official account in the *Dastur Komwar* (DK 31) of Jaipur, now in the Rajasthan State Archives in Bikaner, does describe a visit of Maharaja Sawai Madho Singh to Balanand in VS 1809 (1752 CE) in which there was a formal exchange,

quite common in such situations, of gold *mohars* and coconuts for a *dupatta* and *prasad*. Thereafter, it is written, the Maharaja used to visit Balanand annually to make offerings and receive prasad.[132] However, Horstmann points out that it is unlikely that there was a formal initiation since Balanand is never referred to as the king's "*gurmahant maharaj*", a term which is applied to Balanand's disciple and eventual successor, Govindanand, who initiated[133] Sawai Pratap Singh in VS 1839 (1783 CE) (Horstmann, forthcoming), and who served as a go-between for the Maharaja and the Maratha leader Jaswant Rao Holkar.[134]

The contemporary Dadupanthi hagiographer, Swami Narayandas, relates a traditional Dadupanthi tale about Balanand that took place during the period when Chainram was the Naraina mahant (c. 1753-1780). According to this account, sometime not long after the Galta conference Balanand, believing that not much difference existed between Dadupanthis and Ramanandis, arrived in Naraina with 12,000 armed sadhus for the purpose of forcing Mahant Chainram to adopt Ramanandi sectarian marks such as a *mala* and a *tilak*, and thus converting him into a *vairagi* (Narayandas 1978-79, 102 ff). He was ultimately unsuccessful, but the incident will be considered in greater detail elsewhere for the light it sheds on Dadupanthi-Ramanandi relations. In addition to this incident, there is a mention of his being "mortally wounded" in a battle at Barsana on October 31, 1773. Nawal Singh, the Maharaja of the Jat state of Bharatpur, had been attacked by the Mughal army under Mirza Najaf Khan who was aided by the British. Although overpowered, the European General Sumroo, Balanand and others continued the fight against the Mughals until Balanand was severely, but apparently not fatally, wounded (Pande 1970, 115-116).

Later, he and the Jaipur *diwan* Khushali Ram Bohra are said to have been deputed by

[132] Also quoted in Roy 1978, 192-193.
[133] see also DK 31: 478-479.
[134] KD 639 is an undated *kharita* from Holkar to Sawai Pratap Singh in which it is mentioned that it is being delivered by Govindanand of *thikana* Balanandji.

Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh to negotiate on behalf of Jaipur with the Maratha Mahadaji Sindhia. Sindhia had stormed Sanganer, just south of Jaipur, in order to threaten Sawai Pratap Singh into paying overdue tribute. Balanand and the *diwan* traveled there to meet him in March, 1786 (Tikkiwal 1974, 161). Upon arrival, "he was honored by Sindhia personally kneeling down at his feet and laying a gift of one hundred gold coins and receiving one necklace of pearls and four *oshalas*, one for himself and the rest for his high officers, as a token of his blessings" (Sarkar n.d., 236). Later on, to appease Sindhia, Balanand returned to Jaipur to bring back some cash, then "stood personal security for two lakhs of rupees and finally led Sindhia out of the state" (ibid.).

Horstmann, relying on such references and on sectarian sources, gives Balanand's traditional dates as VS 1710 to VS 1852 (1653-1795 CE) (Thiel-Horstmann 1988, 482). Even the present-day mahant of the Balanand temple in Jaipur has asserted that Balanand is believed to have died in 1795 at the age of 140 years (Roy 1978, 193), illustrating what Horstmann terms the "Balanand problem." That is, if we accept the traditional dates, then Balanand lived over 140 years, remaining active until the end. While it is conceivable that the same individual attended the conferences of 1713, 1734 and 1755, it becomes difficult indeed to accept that the very same individual was fighting *sannyasis* in the late seventeenth century as well as advising maharajas in the late eighteenth century. In the *Dastur Komwar* of Jaipur it is recorded that Balanand was honored by the Jaipur court when he succeeded to the Ramanandi *gaddi* on the death of his predecessor, Virajanand (or Brijananda). Based upon this documentation, Horstmann places his elevation to the position of mahant in 1752 CE (Horstmann forthcoming). This naturally raises a number of questions concerning the timing of Balanand's life and of his organization of the Vaishnava Nagas,[135] not the least of which is

[135] Roy (1978, 193) suggests that the early date of 1713 may be incorrect, or that there may have been two Balanands whose lives were conflated.

how he could have achieved such prominence even forty years prior to his elevation to the position of mahant. Given the few recorded events in his life, it would seem that he did not achieve much renown until his elevation to the position of mahant following the death of his guru in 1752. In that same year he was visited, apparently for the first time, by Sawai Madho Singh I; and in the following year he established his *gaddi* and temple which stand to this day in Jaipur. Thus it seems rather more likely that, if anyone was fighting *sannyasis* in the late seventeenth century, it was his guru, Virajanand, rather than Balanand. It also becomes apparent that it may well have been the guru Virajanand, accompanied by his disciple Balanand, who organized the Vaishnava *akharas* at the Brahmapuri conference of 1734 CE.

Vaishnava conferences

The sectarian sources, although attributing the formal organization of armed Vaishnava ascetics to a reaction to armed *sannyasi* aggression--specifically the invasion of Ayodhya--are not specific when it comes to dates. The invasion of Ayodhya is said to have been after the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 when *jama'ats* of armed *sannyasis* under the leadership of Lacchi Giri attacked Ayodhya, killing Vaishnava sadhus and forcing them to abandon external symbols of their Vaishnava faith (Mital 1968, 108; Simha 1957, 119). Pinch (1996c, 154) places the capture of Ayodhya even earlier, in 1699 CE. The timing of the first conference of the *catuh sampraday* at Vrindaban, during which the topic of organizing a military branch for defense was supposedly first discussed, would suggest that the atrocities at Ayodhya had already occurred, placing this event between 1707 and 1713. Yet it also appears that, due to disagreements among the four factions, no significant progress was made in this regard until some twenty years later, during the Brahmapuri conference of 1734. Depredations by the Shaiva Nagas must have continued, for there are numerous traditional accounts of their

attacks upon traveling groups of Vaishnava sadhus.

However, documents from the Kapad Dwara collection of Jaipur cloud the picture of how the Nagas could possibly have been organized at the 1734 Brahmapuri conference, which was held under the aegis of Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II. Since being appointed the *faujdar* of Mathura in 1722, Sawai Jai Singh had taken tremendous personal interest in the functioning of Hindu, and in particular Vaishnava, sects under his jurisdiction, i.e., in Mathura and Vrindaban as well as Jaipur. As was discussed in the previous chapter, soon after his appointment he organized a conference of the four *sampradays* at Amer in 1723 where he laid out strict guidelines for what constituted a valid Vaishnava sect. A number of new bhakti communities which had arisen were given the choice of either complying, by changing their positions and aligning themselves with one of the four traditional communities, or leaving and moving to a region not under Sawai Jai Singh's direct supervision.

One issue that appears to have been of concern to him was that of sadhus bearing arms. He was clearly opposed to it. His opposition thus indicates two significant points: that the practice already existed to such an extent that it was considered problematic; and that it is unlikely, given such strong opposition, that he would have allowed the formalization of the practice to occur in either Jaipur or Vrindaban during his reign.

The documents maintained in the Kapad Dwara are largely direct responses to letters, edicts and other documents issued by the Maharajas and other representatives of the court of Amer and Jaipur. We do not therefore know the precise wording of the latter documents, although the responses often clarify what must have been the thrust of the original statement. The earliest of these documents dealing with armed sadhus (KD 1300) is a *navisht* (pledge) dated *asadh sudi* 7, VS 1782 (July 5, 1725) and indicates Sawai Jai Singh's attempt to intercede in conflicts between Shaiva and Vaishnava sadhus. In it, Jairam Puri, Sujan Puri,

Surat Puri and Sumer Puri, all Dasnami *mahants* of Dhundar (that is, Jaipur) promise the Maharaja that they "would not allow any clash (*jhagra*) between the clean-shaven *vairagis* and the Nagas" and that they would "always help the right party."

In a letter (KD 1277) dated *jyesth budi* 12, VS 1790 (April 23, 1733), Mangaldas, a disciple of Dhyandas, promises the Maharaja that "*vairagis* would not carry arms against the order of the Maharaja," an order which must have been issued somewhat prior to that date. In a letter dated *bhadra budi* 10, VS 1792 (August 2, 1735) two sadhus whose sectarian affiliation is not specified, Sundardas and Laldas, agree to remain peaceful, keep no weapons and create no disturbance. They further agree not to dine with anyone contravening the rules of this agreement, if necessary turning them out of the *pankti* (the line in which the sadhus sit to dine) (KD 1130).

In an undated letter (KD 1483) to the Maharaja from the same period Prahladdas, Kalyandas, Raghodas and "other *mahants* of the *akhara*" agree to give up the practice of arms. Presumably repeating the wording of the edict they had received from Sawai Jai Singh, the *mahants* in their letter agree that keeping arms would be considered "a violation of the rules of the *catuh sampraday* and a crime against God, Guru and King. A *vairagi* found keeping arms would be bound to perish."[136] Now the very use of the term *akhara* by the *mahants* implies the existence of an organized militant faction. Yet Sawai Jai Singh was insisting that they give up the practice of arms. Is it possible that Balanand had organized the *akharas* sometime either prior to 1734 or during the 1734 Brahmapuri conference without the Maharaja's knowledge or approval? Given his intense interest in all religious and military affairs within his jurisdiction, it seems unlikely that he would have been unaware of such a monumental development. It seems equally unlikely, given his firm treatment of non-

[136] From Monika Horstmann's translation.

compliant religious leaders in other circumstances, that an individual in Balanand's position would have tried to institute such a plan without his approval.

A similar letter (KD 1176), dated *baisakh budi* 7, but with no year given is from Mahant Vrijanand and other Ramanandi *mahants*. Presuming this to be of the same decade as the other *navishts*, then this would be Vrijanand,[137] guru of Balanand, thus confirming that Balanand had not yet been elevated to the position of mahant. These *mahants* promise that they will give up the practice of arms and also boycott those who maintain arms. If they violate their promise, they would "prove guilty to the Ramanandi sect," a clear indication that during the period in question the Ramanandis in and around Jaipur would have been expected not to be armed, let alone organized into armed parties.

The last extant letter regarding the use of arms by sadhus (KD 1275) is dated *baisakh budi* 12, VS 1793 (March 28, 1736) and is from Mahant Govind Das and ten others to the Jaipur court. Thy state that they have already given up the keeping of arms, and that they furthermore will not associate with those who follow that practice nor would they allow such persons into their *pankti* to dine with them. Does the lack of documentary evidence after this date mean that the problem was resolved, or that Sawai Jai Singh became preoccupied with other interests? The answer is unclear. While it is generally accepted that he mostly remained in Jaipur after 1737 until his death in 1743, there is considerable disagreement as to how his time was spent. Bhatnagar refutes J.N. Sarkar's assessment[138] in *Fall of the Mughal Empire* that Sawai Jai Singh had returned to Jaipur after allowing the Marathas to gain control of

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[137] The repeated use of the same name by different individuals is frequently problematic in trying to sort out the various sadhus and devotees, particularly of the Vaishnava sects. However, in this case there appears to have been only one Ramanandi Mahant Vrijanand during this period.

[138] Sarkar seems to have gotten this opinion from the *Vamsha Bhaskar*, composed in 1840 by the court historian of Bundi, in which he asserts that Sawai Jai Singh spent his final years in drunkenness and lechery, and died of a "horrible disease." But Roy (1978, 9) points out that the Bundi court had been controlled since 1748 by descendants of Budh Singh, who had been deposed by the Maharaja, and thus bore him considerable enmity.

Malwa and "gave himself up to sexual excess". On the contrary, asserts Bhatnagar, he continued to play an active role in the negotiations between the Emperor and the Marathas as well as devoting himself to "literary and astronomical activities at his court and his efforts for the revival of the Vedic rites and learning..." (1974, 256-257). The eulogistic *Sawai Jaisingh Carita* (Bahura 1979), composed by the Maharaja's court poet Atmaram, pictures him as engaged in religious reflection and daily devotion to his chosen deity, Govinddev, a depiction repeated by Ishwari Singh's court poet, Krishna Bhatt, in his *Ishvar-Vilas Mahakavya* composed in 1749 (Roy 1978, 8). Sawai Jai Singh's extensive correspondence regarding religious and philosophical matters seems also to have abruptly ended after 1736, indicating a change in his interests and priorities may indeed have occurred as he began to prepare his son Ishwari Singh[139] for the throne after the untimely death of Shiv Singh, his oldest son and heir-apparent, in 1724. Certainly some of his energy was directed toward settling the simmering Bikaner-Jodhpur conflict on his western border and towards establishing a lasting infrastructure for his new capital city. No matter what his occupations during those final years, he appears to have retreated from his earlier active involvement in attempting to control sectarian affairs.

The Nagas in Ayodhya

This still leaves unresolved the question of the details of the formalization and implementation of the *anis* and *akharas* of Vaishnava Nagas. Although Balanand is credited with organizing the Nagas and ending the depredations of Bhairon Giri and those of Lacchi Giri (Sharma 1996, 166), the leader of the Ayodhya attack, there is no evidence of his having traveled there himself. But, by the mid-eighteenth century, a number of the principal *akharas*

[139] Then about fifteen years old.

had been established in Ayodhya, indicating a rapid period of the growth and spread of Vaishnava militarism. According to sectarian histories, the majority of founders were Rajputs from Rajputana so that Balanand is likely (considering the esteem in which he is held) to have had a direct hand in their development. An examination of the traditions of the *akharas* of Ayodhya sheds some light on the pattern of development.

The Digambari[140] *akhara*, also known as Nangas, is said to have been established in Ayodhya in the early eighteenth century by Balaram Das who is supposed to have come to build a temple (Srivastav 1957, 227 ff). However, the earliest datable foundation of an *akhara* is that of the Nirvanis, established by Abhayaram Das during the reign of Safdar Jang as Nawab of Oudh (1739-1754 CE). Bakker (1986, 152) disagrees somewhat, claiming that some *akharas* made their appearance in Ayodhya at a time when new construction of Hindu buildings had begun during the reign of Safdar Jang's predecessor Sadat Khan (1722-1739). He says that the Vaishnava troops were successful in reoccupying sites that had been previously taken over by armed Shaivas, and that "one of the last strongholds of the Shaiva ascetics, the Hanumat hill (the Rajadvara of the Ramadurga)" was reconquered by Abhayaram Das of the Nirvani *akhara* of the Ramanandis during the reign of Safdar Jang. After this, the Nirvanis were acknowledged as the most powerful *akhara*, establishing their headquarters on the reconquered Hanumangarhi hill and eventually splitting into four regional divisions due to growth in numbers. Abhayaram Das is said to have obtained permission from Safdar Jang to build a temple to Hanuman on the reconquered hill which became the predominant temple in Ayodhya, although apparently not completed until the 1770s (Bakker 1986, 145). The Nirmohi *akhara* was founded in Ayodhya about the same time by Govind Das, who had

[140] The following discussion of the establishment of the Ayodhya *akharas* is based primarily upon Simha 1975 and Srivastav 1957.

come from Jaipur.[141] Ratiram Das also came from Jaipur during the administration of Safdar Jang and established a temple and the Santoshi *akhara*.

The remaining three *akharas* of the Ramanandi Nagas were not established until the time of Safdar Jang's successor, Shuja-ud-daula (1754-1775 CE). The Khakis, noted for smearing their bodies with ashes, were established by Dayaram, a sadhu from Chitrakut who was given four *bighas* of land on which to build a temple. Viramal (or Birmal) Das came from the Rajput state of Kota to establish the Niravalambi *akhara* and to build another temple. The mostly wandering Mahanirvanis were founded by Purushottam Das, another sadhu from the region of Kota-Bundi.

It would appear then that the earliest Vaishnava *akharas* in Ayodhya were founded by Ramanandi sadhus of Rajput origins coming from Jaipur just prior to or during the administration of Safdar Jang, i.e., in the mid-1730s and 1740s. Mishra asserts that initially, in addition to the founders, most of the fighting sadhus in these Vaishnava *akharas* were Rajasthanis (Mishra 1997, 137), the majority of them Rajputs. Mital (1968) also emphasizes the Rajasthani origins of the Ramanandi Nagas, attributing it to the "heroic history" of the region. Once these initial Ramanandi *akharas* had been established in Ayodhya and political conditions throughout the north had changed substantially, three more military orders were initiated sometime after 1754, two of them by presumed Rajput sadhus from the region of Kota and Bundi, south of Jaipur. This scenario tends to substantiate the theory that the Vaishnava ascetics were first organized into military orders at the Brahmapuri conference of 1734, with the three later *akharas* being organized sometime after (or possibly at) the Galta conference of 1755. It also would be consistent with Sawai Jai Singh's expressed disapproval

[141] Despite the commonness of the name, this may be the same Mahant Govind Das who had promised in a letter (KD 1275, referred to earlier) to Sawai Jai Singh in March, 1736 that he had already given up the practice of keeping arms.

of the bearing of arms by sadhus, indicating that those Ramanandis wanting to establish military branches left the Maharaja's jurisdiction and traveled to the region around Ayodhya in the several years following the conference while those within his jurisdiction continued to promise not to engage in such practices. Other Vaishnava *akharas* may have been established beyond the borders of Jaipur and outside the region of Braj, both of which were being administered by Sawai Jai Singh. This would also explain why, although the organization of the Vaishnava Nagas is traditionally said to have occurred under the direction of Balanand of Jaipur, the Nagas became first active in the region around Ayodhya, and why there is on the other hand no record of organized Naga activity in Jaipur until the reign of Sawai Madho Singh (1750-1767 CE), when Balanand seems first to have come to prominence. It doesn't explain. however, why Balanand and not his guru is considered the founder of the Vaishnava *akharas*.

Sawai Madho Singh and the Nagas

Many stories suggest that Sawai Madho Singh supported and encouraged Nagas, both Ramanandi and Dadupanthi, during his reign. In a *patta* in the Kapad Dwara collection (KD 1477) dated November 12, 1729 *Maharajkumar* (Prince) Madho Singh confirmed a grant of four villages in *jagir* to a Naga described as his *dhaibhai* (foster brother), a relationship which may partially account for his support. As has been mentioned, he apparently first met Balanand in 1752 CE, and thereafter continued to offer him homage. Although nothing definitive can be said about the activities of Nagas in Jaipur during the reign of his half-brother and predecessor, Ishwari Singh, it may be presumed that he continued the policies of his father, Sawai Jai Singh, on a number of issues, including the matter of arms-bearing sadhus. It seems quite significant that the *Bansadipika* of the nineteenth-century Dadupanthi

Naga chronicler Mangaldas, which contains a comprehensive, laudatory genealogy of the Kachhwaha dynasty of Amer and Jaipur, completely fails to mention Ishwari Singh. Seen by many as usurper of a throne that rightfully belonged to Madho Singh, Ishwari Singh died an ignominious death, suicide by self-inflicted snake bite as the mercenary Maratha army supporting his brother closed in upon the walls of Jaipur. It is possible then that the Dadupanthi Nagas, who felt supported in their endeavors by Madho Singh and in turn supported him, may have felt such antipathy for Ishwari Singh that they simply refused to acknowledge his reign. The Dadupanthi chronicler Mangaldas was himself of Charan origins, and the Charan bards have been known to ridicule or ignore those whom they felt unworthy of their praise. It is worth noting that, although Maharaja Ishwari Singh made amends with some of the sectarian leaders who had been harassed and forced into exile by his father,[142] the Dadupanthi Mahant Krishnadev continued to remain beyond the borders of Jaipur until his death some three years after that of Ishwari Singh in 1750.

The 1755 conference at Galta, in the course of which the decision was made to organize *jama'ats* of Dadupanthi Nagas along the lines of the Ramanandi Nagas, was held under the jurisdiction of Sawai Madho Singh. Dadupanthi tradition does not mention the presence at the conference of representatives of the other Vaishnava communities, although it should be taken as a matter of course that the Ramanandis resident at Galta, and even Balanand himself, would have been in attendance. Even earlier, according to Dadupanthi traditions, the Maharaja had supported the Dadupanthi Nagas in their attempt to usurp the *gaddi* at Naraina upon the death of the previous mahant, Krishnadev (Narayandas 1978-79, I: 91 ff). Krishnadev had been living in exile near Merta in Marwar state for almost twenty years, having fled Jaipur to avoid Sawai Jai Singh's order that he marry. In 1752, at the annual

[142] Notably Sri Ruplal Goswami of the Radhavallabhis.

mela in the month of *phalgun* commemorating Dadu's birth, he announced Chainram as his successor. But when he died in 1753, the Naga sadhus, in cooperation with the Maharaja of Jaipur, seated another disciple of Krishnadev, Gangaram, on the Naraina *gaddi* while Chainram was installed on the *gaddi* in Merta by Dadupanthi sadhus loyal to him.[143]

Then the *uttaradhis* (the "northerners" from Haryana and Punjab) and others gathered at Sambhar and tried to seek a compromise. They wrote to the leading Naga *mahants* suggesting that Chainram be invited to accept the *gaddi* at Naraina, but that Gangaram would be allowed to become the *bhandari*.[144] The Nagas rejected this proposal and reportedly asked Sawai Madho Singh to have the others arrested for plotting to usurp the *gaddi*. He refused to intervene, but did send troops to Naraina to maintain order.

There was a good deal of tension surrounding this attempted usurpation and schism, but it was finally relieved when Gangaram himself and the current *bhandari* Kriparam agreed to allow Chainram, who had been the choice of Krishnadev, to return and occupy the *gaddi*. But Chainram did not want to dishonor and humiliate Gangaram, so he would only agree to return if Gangaram would accept the honorary position of "Mahant of the *Chhatris*", i.e., the memorials to previous *mahants* now located in a garden behind the *barahdari* of Jaitram where the current mahant Hariramji still resides. So, in 1755, Chainram returned and ascended the *gaddi*, but only after Gangaram had voluntarily given up his position, moved to the garden, and assumed the title of "Mahant of the *Chhatris*". When Kriparam later became a householder, Gangaram also became *bhandari*.

In that same year of 1755 the Galta conference was organized, although it is not clear whether the conference occurred before or after the return of Chainram. This was also the

[143] See also Thiel-Horstmann 1985a.
[144] This position has often been a stepping-stone to the position of *mahant*. The present Naraina *mahant*, Hariramji, began his career as *bhandari*.

same year that a good deal of political maneuvering was going on in an attempt to form a military coalition to oppose further Maratha incursions. In July of that year the Maratha leader Jayappa Sindhia was assassinated by Bijay Bharati, a Shaiva ascetic representing Maharaja Bijay Singh of Marwar (Misra 1981, 34). Following the assassination there was an unsuccessful attempt to organize an anti-Maratha coalition involving the Jat Maharaja Suraj Mal, the Rohilla Afghan chieftain Najib Khan, Emperor Alamgir II, and various Rajput rulers of Rajputana. The primary organizer is said to have been either the Maharaja of Marwar (Dwivedi 1989, 156) or Maharaja Sawai Madho Singh of Jaipur (Tikkiwal 1974, 125). The attempt seems to have failed due to the reticence of the Mughal Emperor, but it does again illustrate that religious affiliation was not a consideration in forming alliances at that time. Eventually that year Madho Singh did form a defensive alliance with Shuja-ud-daula, the Nawab of Awadh whose army contained a contingent of Naga *sannyasis* and was led by the brothers Umrao and Anup Giri (ibid.). In September, 1755 the Marathas under Dattaji Scindia did invade Marwar and besiege Nagaur. Marching to confront them, the Jaipur army is said to have advanced "against Naraina and Ramgarh," indicating that the Marathas may have been ensconced there in proximity to the Dadupanthi center of Naraina. The battle shifted to the side of Ramgarh, north of Sambhar Lake, and a running fight continued for several weeks (Sarkar 1950, II: 131).

Given these rather desperate attempts at creating defensive alignments in the latter half of 1755, and the immediate threat of warfare, the almost simultaneous formal military organization of Dadupanthi sadhus at Galta, a mere stone's throw from the eastern gates of Jaipur, seems as though it must have been related. Certainly Madho Singh would have become aware of the presence of Naga sadhus in Shuja-ud-daula's army and may have seen the value of developing a local version which could be called upon if needed in the struggle

against the Marathas. Additionally, Balanand had recently come into favor with the Maharaja, and there were already armed bands of Ramanandi *vairagis*. One thing is certain, the politics of 1755 indicate definitively that the organization of Dadupanthi Nagas had nothing to do with a religious defense against Mughal or Muslim attacks. However, despite his apparent support for the organization of one branch of the Dadu Panth into military *akharas*, there is no recorded evidence of Sawai Madho Singh having employed them in the armies of Jaipur during his reign.[145] In fact, the earliest record of Dadupanthi Nagas being compensated by Jaipur state dates from 1771, during the reign of Sawai Madho Singh's son and successor, Sawai Prithvi Singh (Mishra 1997, 143). It must have taken some time for them to become fully trained and organized even though they were undoubtably carrying arms much prior to 1755. Orr writes, though without references, that the Dadupanthi Nagas "at first fought along with the Ramanandis. Later, when they were powerful enough to maintain their own establishment, they set up their independent *akharas* after the vairagi model" (Orr 1940, 93). Orr, a Christian missionary in Jaipur, spent years in intimate contact with Dadupanthis and published the first major study of Dadu and the Dadu Panth,[146] so he may well have been repeating a traditional notion that he had acquired in the course of his association with them. This must have been the situation prior to the Galta conference, after which they became "powerful enough" to establish their own separate organization.

Clearly, it took decades to construct the independent identity which came to characterize the Nagas. To some degree, their aspirations fit in with the tenor of the times for, as has been shown, young men at this time were flooding the ranks of the groups of armed sadhus flourishing throughout North India. This can be partially ascribed to the increasing

[145] He may well have employed the armed Ramanandis of Balanand. Further research is required on this question.
[146] *A Sixteenth-Century Indian Mystic* (1947), still the most comprehensive account of the sect.

reliance upon mercenary groups by the various contending parties in the increasingly fragmented political picture of the mid-eighteenth century. Stewart Gordon has argued that at this period there were only really two ways for individuals to become engaged in the ongoing process of state formation and its concomitant benefits: either via individual service to some military leader (who were also flourishing) or via some "clan, tribal or *religious*[147] group with some leadership" (1994, 17). In essence, the Dadupanthi Nagas combined the features of both religious group and clan, but to understand the nature of the group it is necessary to retrace the history of the Nagas from the earliest ascribed progenitor, *Bare* Sundardas, or Sundardas the Elder, a task that will be undertaken in the next chapter.

The rather negative Dadupanthi portrayal of Balanand and his attempt to forcefully convert Mahant Chainram to Vaishnavism backed up by a force of 12,000 Vaishnava Nagas indicates a possible conflict between the two Naga organizations at about this time. On the other hand, the choice of Galta as a venue would imply that the Dadupanthis had gone seeking Ramanandi approval or acceptance of their plans, lending credence to Orr's remark that they had previously fought alongside the Ramanandis, though without their own separate organization. This is further evidenced by the information that even today the Dadupanthi Nagas march within the Ramanandi Naga ranks at the Kumbha Mela, so it is indeed clear that the fact that the conference is stated to have taken place at Galta would perforce indicate the participation of the Ramanandis, including Balanand and his followers, if not other Vaishnava communities as well. Yet the outcome of the conference seems to have been exclusively the organization of Dadupanthi Nagas along military lines. Indeed, it is not mentioned at all in the traditions of the Vaishnava communities of Jaipur, indicating perhaps that only in retrospect did it take on significance as an event in the history of the Dadupanthi

[147] Emphasis added.

Nagas.

The account by Swami Narayandas in *Dadu Panth Paricay* (1978-79) says that Balanand arrived in Naraina just after the Galta conference of 1755. It emphasizes that he purposely waited until the Dadupanthi Nagas had begun to wander here and there so that he would not have to face them when he arrived. Indeed, having settled the potential schism with the installation of Chainram as mahant, and having formalized their organization at Galta, there was no necessity for them to continue to maintain their occupation of Naraina. Thus, by all accounts, they began to wander the countryside, spreading out from Jaipur into neighboring territories.

Chapter Five

The Origins, Development and History of the Dadupanthi Nagas

As mentioned previously, sectarian traditions aver that the Dadupanthi Nagas had only been formally organized into *akharas* at a conference at the Ramanandi centre of Galta in 1755 CE, the date also mentioned in nineteenth-century military records of the British Resident in Jaipur maintained in the *Mahakma Khas* collection of the Maharaja of Jaipur (Thiel-Horstmann 1985a, 11). This formal organization seems to have been the culmination of years of a developing sense of their own power and ethos vis-a-vis the sectarian hierarchy that had been established in Naraina under Mahant Jaitram (1693-1732). Their attempt in 1753 to place their own nominee on the *gaddi* of Naraina after having occupied the town for some twenty years following the flight to Marwar of the previous mahant, Krishnadev, has been mentioned. But even earlier, at some point during the tenure of Mahant Jaitram, there had been a prolonged schism in the sect caused by their refusal to remove their distinctive Rajput facial hair and locks at a time when Jaitram had decreed that sadhus belonging to the Dadu Panth should be clean shaven and have shaven heads (Narayandas 1978-79, vol. I: 74 ff). For several years the Nagas refused to participate in the annual mela at Naraina, opting instead to hold their own gathering at nearby Bhairana. According to Narayandas' account, they finally returned to Naraina several years later only after it was agreed that they could maintain their outwardly Rajput appearance.

Although their formal organization into *akharas* is said to have taken place in 1755, the Dadupanthi Nagas had already been armed for some time, as is evident from pledges to

disarm themselves which they and armed sadhus of other sects made to Sawai Jai Singh II in the 1720s and 1730s.[148] Yet, despite these pledges, it has been noted that by the mid 1730s Ramanandi and Nimbark *vairagis* had already armed and organized themselves into *akharas*, and had even begun to wrest control of Ayodhya from Shaiva Nagas. For at least several decades the Dadupanthi Nagas, although not independently organized, nonetheless seem to have traveled and cooperated with the armed Ramanandi *vairagis*, many of whom would also have been Rajputs from Amer.

Those within the Dadu Panth who came to be known as Nagas[149] trace their lineage to Dadu through his earliest disciple Sundardas, said to be a son of Rao Jaitsi of Bikaner. These days most Dadupanthis rely upon oral traditions or, perhaps to an even greater extent, the three-volume hagiographical work of Swami Narayandas, *Dadu Panth Paricay* (1978-79), which devotes a good deal of space to the Nagas and for many Dadupanthis has replaced oral traditions. Often when I would inquire about any point of Dadupanthi history, I would simply be told to go and read the works of Narayandas, for everything of importance in the history of the community would be found there. When I visited him at his residence in Ajmer, the 95-year-old sadhu was weak and bedridden and could tell me very little about his sources. He indicated only that he had relied upon oral traditions as well as earlier manuscripts he had found in the possession of other sadhus. However, it is clear that Narayandas, who is himself within the Naga lineage, had particularly relied upon the accounts of two authors associated with that tradition: the Naga Swami Mangaldas, the nineteenth-century Charan chronicler and author of *Bansadipika* and *Sundaroday*; and Raghodas, the Rajput disciple of Haridas who had composed a *Bhaktamal* circa 1660 CE, some two hundred years prior to the

[148] See Chapter Four.

[149] The use of the term Naga for members of this lineage of Dadupanthi sadhus first appears in the *Bhaktamal* of Raghodas (1660), but did not come into common usage until sometime in the eighteenth century.

compositions of Mangaldas.

A comparison of the representations of Naga history and identity presented by Raghodas and Mangaldas gives a very striking image of the changes that occurred within that particular lineage, and in the Dadu Panth in general, during the period of approximately two centuries between 1660 and 1860.

Sundardas, the progenitor

These days the standard story of Sundardas, born Bhim Singh Rathore, is told with a surprising lack of variation, quite probably because of the pervasive influence of Narayandas' account. As the progenitor of the Nagas, his family origins and his heroic military and spiritual exploits have been of great symbolic significance to the Dadupanthi Nagas throughout their existence. Indeed, they take on a particularly legendary quality due to his mysterious disappearance from the community of Dadu's devotees.

He was born a younger son of Rao Jaitsi, the Rathore ruler of the still rather fledgling desert state of Bikaner. Jaitsi, the grandson of Rao Bika, the founder after whom the princely state was named, and the great-grandson of Rao Jodha, the founder of the state of Jodhpur/Marwar, succeeded to the throne in 1526 CE upon the death in battle of his own father, Rao Lunkaran. Sources disagree as to how many sons Jaitsi had, Karni Singh (Singh 1974) listing five while the editor of Suja's story of Jaitsi (Suja 1986) lists seven. Yet all sources seem to agree that Bhim or Bhimraj was the second, the younger brother of Jaitsi's eventual successor, Kalyanmal. Based upon a couplet in the *Sundaroday* of Mangaldas, Bhim is believed to have been born about three years after his elder brother in *Samvat* 1579 (1522 CE) (quoted in Mishra 1997, 110).

The future prince Kalyan was born of a daughter of the King of Amer.

> A rishi like Vishvamitra was incarnated for the purpose of bhakti.
> On *phalgun sudi* 2, (VS) 1579 Bhimraj appeared.
> The spread of bhakti was his responsibility.

It must be remembered that Jaitsi ascended the throne of Bikaner in the same year that Babar established Mughal supremacy in areas of North India by his defeat of Sultan Ibrahim Lodi at the Battle of Panipat, and that the period of his reign was accompanied by more or less constant warfare in the rapidly changing power structure which characterized this period of early Mughal ascendancy in the region. When Babar died in 1530, his territories were divided between his two sons, Humayun and Kamran. Kamran took possession of the region around Lahore, but later attacked and took possession of the Bikaner-controlled fort of Bhatner, engaging in several battles with Rao Jaitsi's forces around 1534 and after (Mishra 1997, 111). In the *Rao Jaitsi ro Chhand* (Suja 1986), a contemporary account of the reign of Rao Jaitsi composed circa 1535 CE by Jaitsi's Charan bard (Swami 1973, 10), that chronicles his defense of Bikaner in the face of periodic incursions by Mughal forces as well as the armies of Jodhpur, Bhim is depicted as a valiant Rajput warrior, notwithstanding the fact that he would have been in his early teens at that time. He is mentioned as having joined a night attack upon the Mughal army shortly after Babar's son Kamran had defeated the Rathore rulers of Bikaner.

> Bhim, of noble descent, anxious to fight ferociously like Bhim Pandava,
> decorated himself with arms for the battle,
> lifted up his sword and mounted his horse. (RC, 251)

Elsewhere, he is again described preparing for battle:

> Bhim mounted his horse of his own accord in order to strike the heads
> of the armored horses, elephants and warriors. (RC, 277)

Later, in 1541, Rao Maldeo of Jodhpur, claiming a right of possession over Bikaner,

attacked it. Jaitsi reacted by sending his minister to Emperor Sher Shah, who three years earlier had defeated Humayun and assumed control of Delhi and much of North India, in order to seek his support in repelling the attack. It is unclear whether or not it was at this time, accompanying the minister Nagaraj, that Bhimraj first went to Delhi. However, it is asserted that Bhimraj, accompanied by fifty horsemen, did go to Delhi at about that time where he joined the service of Sher Shah and even developed a friendship with the Emperor.[150]

Meanwhile, in 1542 CE, Rao Jaitsi was killed in the Battle of Saheba and much of Bikaner was occupied by the forces of Jodhpur. Persuaded of the rightness of the cause of liberating Bikaner from this occupation, Sher Shah marched to Ajmer accompanied by Bhim and met up with Jaitsi's son and successor, Rao Kalyanmal, and his army. Feeling threatened, the Jodhpur forces abandoned their occupation of Bikaner and returned to Marwar (Powlett 1932, 18-19).[151] Tessitori (1917, 245) writes that the bardic chronicles he had studied give the date of this event as VS 1600 (1543 CE). Sher Shah himself conferred the *tika* on Kalyanmal, legitimizing his rule, and sent him back to Bikaner, while Bhim seems to have accompanied the Emperor back to Delhi. In 1545, when Bhim returned to Bikaner, Kalyanmal granted him a *jagir* (still known today as Bhimasar) (Mishra 1997, 112) and conferred upon his "brave and sagacious brother Bhimraj the title of 'The Restorer of Lost Land' (*bai bhumi ka bahru*), a title borne to the present day by his descendants, the Bhimrot Bikas" (Powlett 1932, 21).[152]

According to hagiographers, Bhim hadn't wanted to marry, but nonetheless had been

[150] Sarwani, in the English translation of his history of Sher Shah by B. P. Ambashthya (Sarwani 1974, 676), notes that different accounts variously claim that either Nagraj, Bhim or Kalyanmal went to seek aid from Sher Shah. Based upon several accounts, L.P. Tessitori (1917, 244-245) wrote that Biramdev of neighboring Merta apparently first went to seek Sher Shah's aid, and was followed later by both Bhim and Kalyanmal. What all agree on is that Sher Shah agreed to march on Marwar to compel Rao Maldeo to withdraw from Bikaner and Merta.

[151] Much of Powlett's account is based upon *Rao Jaitsi ro Chand* and the nineteenth-century *khyat* of Dayaldas.

[152] Interestingly, Mishra, citing Powlett, states the title as "*gai bhumi ka bahadur*" or "Hero of the Land of Cows".

married in *Samvat* 1598 (1541 CE) to the sister of Rana Udai Singh of Mewar. Bhimraj appears to have settled down for awhile, at least as far as Powlett is concerned. He says that he does not appear in later expeditions and "seems to have rested on his honors" (Powlett 1932, 22), a conclusion based upon the lack of further mention of Bhimraj in historical chronicles.[153] Even the contemporary Maharaja of Bikaner, Karni Singh, in his account of his own family lineage (1974), makes no mention of Bhim after his return from Delhi, and he does indeed seem to disappear from any remaining historical accounts or official records of Bikaner. Yet, according to the traditions of the Dadu Panth, Bhim later joined military service as a *mansabdar* in the army of the Mughals, who had returned to power in 1555 CE. In 1566-67, when the Mughal Emperor Akbar's disaffected half brother, Mirza Hakim, launched attacks against him, Bhim was involved in pushing him back to Lahore and thence to Kabul.

The basic story, known to all Dadupanthis and an essential point of beginnings for all Dadupanthi Nagas, is first recounted in the *Bhaktamal* of Raghodas, composed in 1660 CE. Interestingly, in fact, Sundardas the Elder[154] is not even mentioned in the much earlier biography of Dadu composed by Jan Gopal, indicating that in the period shortly after the death of Dadu he was either unknown to the close disciples of Dadu or not considered by them to be a significant figure. In this story, as recounted by Mishra (1997, 113-117) and Narayandas, Bhim was wounded in battle near Kabul, fell unconscious on the field, and was presumed dead. Later, he was discovered to be still living and was nursed back to health, but not before news of his supposed death had been carried back to Bikaner. Once fully recovered, he traveled to Agra to report to Emperor Akbar, stopping afterwards at the sacred

[153] Tessitori has noted that, after the reclamation of Bikaner, not much of military or other significance occurred during the remainder of Kalyanmal's reign. Because of this, he feels, there is a dearth of bardic chronicles from this period of Bikaner's history (1917, 247).
[154] Bhimraj, who was rechristened Sundardas by Dadu, is often referred to as Sundardas the Elder (*Bare* Sundardas) to distinguish him from one of Dadu's later disciples, Sundardas the Younger (*Chhote* Sundardas) (1596-1689 CE).

city of Mathura. There he ran into his family's hereditary *rajpurohit*,[155] Prahlad, who may have been in Mathura to perform necessary funeral rites for Bhim. He learned from Prahlad that, upon hearing of her husband's death, Bhim's wife had committed *sati* and that his eldest son had assumed leadership of the family. Stricken with sorrow, Bhim decided then and there to abandon the world, seek out a guru and devote himself to ascetic and spiritual practices. Initially, he went in search of discipleship to a highly reputed Nimbark *vairagi* in Mathura named Chatur Das. Chatur Das is said to have refused his offer to become a disciple, but told him that he should go to meet Dadu Dayal, who had recently established himself in Sambhar.

Accompanied by Prahlad, Bhim traveled to Sambhar and first met Dadu around *Samvat* 1625 or 1626 (1568-69 CE). At that time, Bhim would have been about 46 years of age and Dadu would have been 24 or 25. Bhim was immediately initiated as the first disciple of Dadu. The nature of the initiation is not related, but it would have been a simple gesture similar to the initiation described by Sundardas the Younger (1596-1689 CE) who as a youth was accepted as a disciple by Dadu. In the section of his *Vani* known as *guru sampraday*,[156] he recounts: "When Dadu came to Dausa, I obtained his darshan in my youth (6). I washed his feet and placed my head on them; he placed his hand on my head. Swami Dadu is my guru; he made Sundardas his disciple (7)" (Mishra 1992, 191). Dadu may have also, in initiating Bhim and others, given a mantra, or a name of the *nirgun* deity to be repeated, a name such as Ram. Sundardas the Younger mentions this in his composition known as *guru ashtak*, the refrain of which says "Guru Dadu came, repeated the word, and told (me) that

[155] Although Brahmins, the highly trusted, hereditary *rajpurohits* (royal priests) of Rajput kings in Rajputana were often known to be trained in weapons and to engage in battle. Powlett (1932) mentions two such *rajpurohits*, relatives of Prahlad, who were killed in battle: Bikansi, who was killed fighting for Rao Lunkaran of Bikaner (12) and his son, Lakmi Das, who was killed defending Rao Jaitsi (17). Additionally, *rajpurohits* were frequently used as high-level messengers, as illustrated by a *kharita* dated VS 1838 (1781 CE) from Maharaja Gaj Singh of Bikaner to Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh of Jaipur in which he notes that he has sent the message along with a *tika* from his *rajpurohit* Gumaniram (1977, 110).

[156] I thank Professor Monika Horstmann for pointing out this passage.

Brahma is indestructible" (ibid., 222-231). In this manner, as Sundardas the Younger was initiated in later years, so too was Bhim. Having accepted him, Dadu commented that Bhim was "handsome" (*sundar*) and thus bestowed upon him the spiritual name of Sundardas. According to Mishra, Bhim was told to secretly immerse himself in devotion to god. He then is said to have retired to the hillside retreat of Bhairana, about twenty kilometers from Sambhar, where there is still a cave (now turned into a shrine) said to have been used for meditation by both Dadu and himself. For one year he remained there, often walking down to Sambhar to sit with Dadu.

Meanwhile, according to the standard account, Prahlad and Bhim seem to have split up somewhere along the way to their meeting with Dadu. When he arrived in Sambhar sometime later, Prahlad, too, expressed his desire to become a disciple of Dadu. Dadu, however, told him that he should become a disciple of the one who had brought him there, meaning Bhim. Thus Prahlad, taking the name Prahladdas, became the direct disciple of Sundardas rather than Dadu, and went to join him in Bhairana.

After a year, Sundardas and Prahladdas, seeking greater isolation for their ascetic practices, traveled eastward to the rugged hills surrounding the village of Ghatra in the southwestern part of the present-day Alwar district of Rajasthan. Mahant Jairamdas, the current mahant of the monastery and shrine at Ghatra, told me that the two had initially passed through the region on their way from Mathura to Sambhar and had recalled its sense of peaceful isolation. Hence, it was to this area that they returned after their stay at Bhairana. After awhile, local Rajput *thakurs* invited them to move nearer to Ghatra, which they did.[157] A little more time passed, and Sundardas announced his intention to wander north to "*achalgiri*," the "immovable mountains" said to be in the foothills of the Himalaya. He then

[157] See DPP: 3, 357 ff.

passes out of the story for, with a few rather miraculous exceptions, no one ever saw or heard of him again.[158] Prahladdas remained at Ghatra, establishing his seat (*gaddi*) there and eventually initiating a number of disciples, notable among them Hari Singh, the brother of Maharaja Man Singh of Amber.

In the *Bhaktamal*, Raghodas devotes only eight verses to Sundardas, referring in an almost epigramatic fashion to what must have been by then well-known stories of his exploits, interspersing them with the praise typical of such hagiographical literature.

371.
The crown jewel of the halls of Dadu was a vessel
 worthy of compare.
Like Narada, he set his mind (to it) and became fearless.
 Limitless wisdom was spoken between them.
Like a bee, Bhim flew to the heavens, such a strong,
 accomplished, pure companion was he.
Later came the fortunate growth (i.e., of the Nagas)
 as one by one the incomparable great ones (appeared).

372.
In this way, a great ruling Rajput (like) Ram entered the panth
 and made it complete.
He remained quiet and aloof, not engaged
 in spreading (bhakti).
The seedling of wisdom arose in his solitude.
He decided to resist ignorance, and went far away
 to the northern valleys where he sat.
Ragho says, the (spiritual) wealth of Dadu soon
 made him auspicious (and) he became liberated.

373.
The son of the king of the northern land came
 and met with the Emperor.

[158] Mishra (1997, 118) mentions the legend that at some unspecified later date Sundardas miraculously appeared to two sadhus at the village of Papurna, near Khetri in the region of Shekhawati. To mark the event there is a Sundardas temple and an annual *mela* which is still celebrated. It is only in recent years that the villagers have come to realize that the Sundardas whose appearance they celebrate and the Dadupanthi Naga Sundardas are apparently one and the same.

He had penetrated with force into the fort (of Kabul)
and as soon as he was engaged in the battle, he was wounded.
His subordinates were dazed and fled, (but) the
thakur remained there in that field.
Ragho says, the Lord became there the protector
of the noble Sundardasji.

374.
In Mathura he met people from his country who came
and told him the news about the *sati* (of his wife).
"Now I'll not go home," (he said), and a great
desire arose to go to the feet of some ascetic.
He abandoned his arms, his horse, his saddle, everything.
He gave up battle and forsook the life of a householder.
Ragho says, the noble Sundardasji went to the Lord of Guru-wisdom.

375.
He went bearing sweets to meet the Naga, who said,
when he was before him, "O brother, listen.
In Sambhar has appeared the best of gurus.
You go to the feet of Dadu!"
He accepted it with faith and went very quickly.
(With) love for the beloved, he met the giver of happiness.
Ragho says, noble Sundardasji met with him for a year
and obtained wisdom in just a day.

376.
Bhagwan put on a form, he remained one year,
as a jewel-less cobra remains.
Like the northern Ganga (flowing) from Mt. Sumeru,
someone came and recited the verses of Swami (Dadu).
As a swan flew bearing Sanaka and other rishis to the sky, so he went.
Ragho says, noble Sundardasji was Dadudayal's beautiful companion.

377.
The raja of Bikaner's younger brother whose name was Sundar,
A great warrior and hero, who wielded the sword of dharma.
The Emperor gave him an army for the campaign against Kabul.
He fought against enemies, and suffered a massive wound.
He couldn't be reached in the field, (until)
someone lifted him and carried him away.

He came to the town of Mathura and heard
of the *sati* of his wife.
He gave up all: royal heritage, wealth, position,
the royal courts and capitals.
He received the knowledge of Brahma from his guru;
he was the gem bearer of Dadu.[159]

Raghodas succinctly recounts the story of the battle, the injury, the recovery, the journey to Mathura, and the news of the *sati* of his wife. It was at that point, say Raghodas, that Sundardas resolved to forsake the mundane world of the householder for the ascetic life, giving up in the process those possessions and rights which signified his identity as a royal Rajput of the Rathore clan. According to his account, when Sundardas forsook the householder's life just prior to his coming into contact with Dadu, he did abandon many aspects of his Rajput personality, those which characterized him as belonging to the caste of warriors and kings. In fact, Raghodas offers two variations on the theme of his renunciation:

He abandoned his arms, his horse, his saddle, everything.
He gave up battle and forsook (the life of) a householder.
(BM, 374)

He gave up all: royal heritage, wealth, position,
the royal courts and capitals.
(BM, 377)

Having adopted the life of an ascetic, having met his guru in the person of Dadu, having performed spiritual disciplines in the area of Ghatra, Sundardas simply disappears. He "went far away to the northern valleys" where he became "liberated," leaving behind only his companion Prahladdas.

[159] Here the status of Sundardas as the "gem bearer" of Dadu is contrasted with the previous stanza in which he was compared to a "jewel-less cobra." In traditional representations, the cobra is depicted as not just protecting jewels, but as wearing one himself in his forehead. The sense is that at the end of one year Sundardas was given realization, or "the knowledge of Brahma."

Prahladdas and his disciples

At some point in time, Prahladdas began to accept disciples of his own. Whether this occurred soon after the departure of Sundardas or considerably later is not recorded. It must have been the latter, though, as Dadu lived for another thirty years or more in the region; and there is nothing to indicate that either Prahlad or his disciples ever came into his presence during that period, indicating the likelihood that many of the disciples of Prahladdas joined him only after the death of Dadu in 1604 CE. This line of disciples of Sundardas the Elder through his sole disciple, Prahladdas, developed separately for a considerable time, with perhaps only occasional sojourns to Naraina where Dadu's successors had established themselves. According to sectarian accounts, its membership continued to grow as one by one Prahladdas accepted new disciples who gradually spread out between Amer and the town of Hindaun in the present-day Bharatpur district of eastern Rajasthan, singing *bhajans*, meditating upon the Name of God, and composing religious songs and poetry of their own. What set this group apart from other branches of the sect which were spreading out and developing in Naraina and elsewhere, and which were largely engaged in similar devotional activities, was that its membership was predominantly Rajput in origin.

It is quite significant, therefore, that Raghodas, who refers to his own Rajput ancestry in the ultimate verse of the *Bhaktamal*, placed such emphasis upon Sundardas' renunciation of the essential components of the identity of a Rajput noble of that period: arms, horse and saddle, even warfare itself; power, wealth and prestige; the life of a householder, which meant a wife and children as well as land. By emphasizing the abandonment of traits and accoutrements associated with a Rajput warrior, particularly one from a royal family, Raghodas seems to be highlighting the degree of his renunciation. Yet the effect is also to call

attention to the very fact that he was a warrior and a "royal" Rajput, a "son of the king of the northern land," "a great ruling Rajput" comparable to Ram, the "Bikaner Raja's younger brother" who "wielded the sword of dharma."

Although there are numerous instances in legend and literature of Rajputs, men of the warrior class, becoming ascetics and renouncers,[160] the sheer concentration of such men in the lineage of Sundardas seems unusual, perhaps even unprecedented. Yet, with the political stability and economic expansion experienced by Amer after its alliance with the hegemonic Mughal Empire in 1562 CE, there must have been an increasing number of young, landless Rajput youth in the state who would have been attracted to the community.

Although Prahladdas, from his seat at Ghatra, began to attract many disciples, it was a significant breakthrough for the visibility and legitimacy of the group when he accepted as a disciple Hari Singh (known affectionately as Happaji), a younger, and possibly illegitimate, brother of Raja Man Singh of Amer. It is Hari Singh, who took the religious name of Haridas, who was later projected as the link to Sundardas of those who came to call themselves Nagas, for those who trace their lineage to Sundardas and Prahladdas via other disciples of the latter are not truly considered to be Nagas. Even the *mahants* of Ghatra, descended from the lineage of Prahladdas through another disciple, Keshavdas, have never been considered to be Nagas, although they are in charge of the site most sacred to them.

Like his guru Sundardas, Prahladdas is not mentioned at all in Jan Gopal's early biography of Dadu, indicating that he must have had only a tangential relationship, if any at all, with Dadu and his other followers after the move to Ghatra. For other Dadupanthis of that time, he was either unknown or not considered significant. Yet a few decades later, at the time of the composition of Raghodas' *Bhaktamal*, the charismatic influence of Prahladdas,

[160] For example, in the Rajasthani tales of Pabuji, King Bharthari and King Gopichand. Regarding Pabuji, see John D. Smith 1991; regarding the latter two, see Ann G. Gold 1992.

and even more so of Haridas, over men of the warrior class, meaning in that region predominantly Rajputs of the ruling Kacchwaha clan, had become a matter of note. Haridas is first introduced after references to two of the well-known, principal disciples of Dadu: Mohandas Daftari, who is credited with recording the compositions of Dadu and thus in some sense promulgating the panth, and Garibdas, the son of Dadu and the first Mahant of Naraina after the death of Dadu.

> 513.
> Dadu is guru of the ten directions;
> Mohandas is the guide who revealed the dharma .
> The holder of that *gaddi* is steadfast in the practice of *tapas*,
>   the mighty leader, Garib(das) who resides in Govind Niwas.
> Later appeared the paragon of disciples, a *paramahamsa*,
>   majestic Hari, who worshipped the divine,
>   who guarded against the confusion of karma,
>   who brought fame to the high family lineage.
> He was a great man, a precursor, a creator,
>   and a citizen of Amer of astonishing influence.
> Ragho bows toward his demeanor.

Later, Raghodas devotes four verses to Haridas and his disciples, as well as other important disciples of Prahlad:

> 528.
> Haridas, the disciple of the highest of men, Prahlad,
>   shone like a crown jewel.
> First among the Kacchwaha lineage, his earlier name was Happa.
> When he came around Prahlad, he renounced his own lineage,
>   karma and power.
> A gentle Kacchwaha prince, no playfulness or laughter.
> He meditated with even breath, revering the state of liberation
>   from the world.
> Thus (there was) a sign to us that he had been united with the Lord.
> Ragho says, he became absorbed (in that which is) beyond limits.

> 529.
> The highest of men Prahlad had so many disciples.

Among them were great warriors, who became attached to Happaji.
High and low without end. Some of those were even, so to say,
bad men.
Charandas was a singer of *bhajans*. The bearer of the *tilak*
was Keshav.
Haridas was a meritorious mahant who entered the abode
of Hari, the Lord.
(There were) Kanhardas, Kalyan and also Paramanand the proud.
Ramdas and Hardas were *rishis* of devotion to the sacred.
In this way, Ragho has the desire day and night to recite
the (names of) the devotees of the divine guru,
Because so many disciples of the highest of men, Prahlad,
are in the place of honor at the head of (all) religious paths.

530.
In this way, the one support of the disciples of Happaji is the
Name of Hari.
Uddhodas, who was the abode of steadfast dharma, received the *tika*.
He felt passion for Ragho's Ram, seated (on the *gaddi*)
he made that manifest.
Long, auspicious days Udaichand (spent) acquiring Ishvar.
Anand was a compassionate lad, Shyam and Gobind
roared out his fame.
There were Tursi and Hariram, also Parbati Bai.[161]
Both had *tilaks* of Bhagwan, the brother disciples had
the entirety of wisdom.

531.
Krishandas, Mohan, Magan, and Uddho from Ajmer remain.
Gagan was absorbed and wandered around playfully
with a powerful gang, saying "Hari, Hari."
Accomplished in the highest wisdom, he gave food and water
with his wealth.
To his disciples, who came before him and were taken to his abode,
he gave many inner experiences.
They performed duties excellently whenever protecting,
because (protecting) is the way of life of the royal caste.[162]
The one support of the disciples of Happaji is the Name of Hari.

[161] Clearly, Haridas had at least one female disciple; beyond this reference, no further mention is made of Parbati Bai or any other female disciples.
[162] That is, Kshatriyas or Rajputs.

Raghodas makes it clear that the group of young men who gathered around Prahladdas were attracted by his charismatic personality. Although on occasion, he uses the word "panth" to describe the followers of Dadu, it must be understood more in terms of its root meaning of "path" or "way of life" than in the sense of an organized body of disciples with clearly delineated teachings. Unlike other disciples who had lived and traveled with Dadu for years and thus had the opportunity to imbibe his message of *nirgun* bhakti, Prahladdas had spent only a limited amount of time in his company. Indeed, he was the disciple of Sundardas, who himself had had only limited contact with Dadu, for verse 376 of *Bansadipika* indicates that rather than going to visit or study with Dadu, often "someone came and recited the verses of Swami" to Sundardas as a method of transmitting Dadu's message of *nirgun* bhakti to him. He had then left Prahladdas on his own after only a few short years. Compared to widespread notions of the training and indoctrination of disciples and the transmission of teachings, Prahladdas and his lineage seem only marginally related to the other lines of Dadu's disciples who were focused upon the person of Dadu and, after his death in 1604 CE, upon his successors on the *gaddi* at Naraina. Although it seems likely that the group of disciples around Prahladdas began to attend the annual gathering in Naraina that rapidly developed immediately after the death of Dadu, there had been little if any previous contact between the two groups. Even Haridas, the brother of Raja Man Singh of Amer, seems never to have had direct contact with Dadu, since there is no mention in the literature or oral traditions of such a meeting, although Man Singh himself figures significantly in Jan Gopal's account. This may indicate, then, that Haridas became a disciple of Prahlad only sometime after 1604.

Clearly there must have been later contacts between the two factions, as indicated by

Raghodas' familiarity with the earliest Naraina Mahant Garibdas and events at Naraina, but the point here is that there may well have been only intermittent contact and no formalized transmission of teachings for the period of thirty years or more between Prahlad's initial meeting with Dadu and the latter's death. Given this initial separation from Dadu and his other disciples, it is not surprising to find the Nagas, as they came to be called, developing their own, alternative interpretation of how to follow Dadu's path of *nirgun* bhakti. It is a vision which in the seventeenth century was greatly affected by the Rajput ethos brought into the group by the large number of young Rajput men who became attracted to Prahladdas and Haridas. Raghodas makes this clear in verse 529, speaking of the "great warriors" among the disciples of Prahladdas who were "attracted to Happaji." Among them, he states, were wealthy and poor, royal and not-so-royal, "high and low" as well as some who were admittedly "bad men." He speaks, for instance, of the disciple Gagan (verse 531) who "wandered around playfully with a gang of men saying 'Hari, Hari,'" a description that seems somewhat disparaging and appears to connect Gagan with those "bad men" who among other things must have appeared insincere to Raghodas. Furthermore, in the same verse he clearly indicates that some of those Rajputs initiated by Haridas continued to perform caste-related duties, what might be termed dharmic obligations, of providing protection. Such duties may well have involved the use of weapons.

As has been described, after the death of Dadu many of his close followers and disciples scattered throughout northwestern India to areas of Malwa, Gujarat, Punjab and as far east as the city of Varanasi where the younger Sundardas spent a number of years in study. Without any firm central authority until the advent of Jaitram as Mahant of Naraina in 1693, each developed his own sense of what it meant to be a devotee of Dadu and to one degree or another inculcated that sense in his own disciples. Although later, in the eighteenth

century, conditions would be such that many local Rajput youth would be attracted to join the Dadupanthi Nagas who were engaged in mercenary soldiering activities, during most of the seventeenth century those who were attracted to the lineage of Haridas engaged in quite different activities. According to the account of Raghodas, Haridas and his immediate followers were primarily interested in literary production, an interest that characterized other branches of the panth as well.

Mohandas Daftari, perhaps with the assistance of Dadu himself, had begun to compile and collect the compositions of Dadu even within his lifetime. Others began doing so as well, collecting the compositions of not only Dadu, but of other *nirgun sants* as well, notably Kabir, Namdev, Haridas, and Raidas. In addition, sadhus began composing their own poetry and songs, each collecting them into his own *Vani*.

Raghodas speaks of literary production as an essential facet of the life of Dadupanthi sadhus during the mid-seventeenth century, a period of rapid cultural development in the state of Amer. Many writers have noted the tremendous flourishing of the arts, including literature, that occurred in Amer from the reign of Raja Man Singh (1590-1614 CE) onwards. It was a result not just of the influence of Mughal courtly fashions, but also of the relative peace and prosperity that characterized Amer in the century or so following its alliance with the Mughals. Both Man Singh and Jai Singh I (1621-1667 CE) were great patrons of the arts, and Ram Singh I (1667-1688 CE) has been described by the historian M. L. Sharma as himself a poet who "wrote in Braj Bhasha and extended his patronage to several poets who migrated from the Agra side to settle in Jaipur" (1969, 280-281). Sharma specifically mentions Sundardas the Younger as one poet who flourished under the patronage of Jaipur/Amer at this time, although he mistakenly associates him with the reign of Bishan Singh (1689-1700 CE) who only came to the throne the year of Sundardas' death. Yet the thrust of his argument

remains valid, that the literary arts flourished among the Rajputs of Amer throughout the seventeenth century. It is quite clear from Raghodas' account that the majority of those Rajputs who gathered around Happaji in Hindaun were highly literate men who spent much of their time copying poetry and songs, both their own compositions and those coming from the oral tradition, and producing collections of it for distribution.

> 360.
> Dadu was a second sun, who with faultless insight composed
> his *Vani.*
> He spoke words of wisdom, devotion, renunciation,
> participation in righteousness.
> Delving into scores of collections, the panth produces
> summaries and abridgements (i.e., collections).
> Pure consciousness is harmonious (when) pure omniscience
> is manifested.
> The light of the highest bliss destroys the fetters of this life.
> Description is the drop, the couplet is water, the verse is the river,
> and Hari is the Ocean.
> Dadu was a second sun, who with faultless insight composed
> his *Vani.*

Raghodas clearly puts the *Vani* of Dadu in a separate class from other literature, as something that can affect one's spiritual growth as deeply as recitation of the name of the guru (Dadu) or the Lord (Ram or Hari). Yet, like recitation, it is a tool for spiritual development rather than an object of adoration *per se*.

> 510.
> Dadu Dayal is a guardian of the light; wisdom arises at the time
> of perfect repose.
> As the eight watches (of the day) in an unbroken line are just one
> (day), so in the heart (we) recite the name of the guru.
> The *Vani* takes the great wealth of Brahma (and puts it) in a
> treasury; all see that this world is a false dream.
> By remembering the words and examining them with every breath,
> says Ragho, one gains the wealth of that skilled meditation.

Here he is advocating recitation or reading of Dadu's words and intense meditation upon them, rather than the mere worship of them which has become predominant among Dadupanthis today. Such close reading, and the writing and copying of religious verse, is but one aspect of the religious practices of the sadhus of that time, practices which also included meditation, certain forms of yoga, and listening to songs and stories composed on religious themes.

> 509.
> In Dadu's panth is contentment, cleverness, reflection upon
> the feet of Hari.
> Sacred tales, religious songs, affection, for the purpose of
> singing of the glory of Hari.
> The society remains together, creating the feeling of love
> for Parabrahma.
> Creating books of many kinds, (like) a bird named allegory.
> Stories of the attributes of the adepts are told which bring great benefit.
> Wisdom, yoga, renunciation, and absorption separate mind and body.
> In Dadu's panth is contentment, cleverness, reflection upon the feet of Hari.

A few lines later, he describes the "complete method" for spiritual development, a method that seems not dissimilar from that employed by countless other ascetic communities of the time.

> 512.
> He that desires Ramji profits (by being) within the monastery
> of Ram.
> So that, progressing through the degrees of knowledge
> and sub-knowledge, he attains the treasure.
> Knowledge of *samkhya* yoga, karma yoga, *bhajans*, bhakti yoga,
> knowing the Vedas and *shastras*, this is the complete method.
> Ragho says, night and day, Ram is not forgotten for an instant.
> A body conquered and a mind unattached is a great treasure.

In fact, although he here and there refers to the fact that his fellow disciples are primarily Rajputs from the upper classes of society, Raghodas puts relatively little emphasis on their warrior ethos, except when he comments upon their abandonment of the principal outward manifestations of that ethos, as he did in the case of Sundardas. In his estimation, though, the disciples worthy of the highest praise are those known either for their learning, their ability in composing poetry on spiritual themes, their theological acumen, or their miraculous powers. Of Dhyandas, he says:

> 514.
> Dhyandas had a wealthy father; he abstained from food
> and sang of the virtues of Hari.
> With his brother Kanhardas he spread the bhakti of Hari.
> All Prakrit and Sanskrit poetry, with often mysterious meters,
> he knew.
> He could (figuratively) separate the milk from the water,
> could make explanations to the stupid.

Of Gobind Das, he writes:

> 516.
> The very heart of the band of Dadu Dindayal worships Hari.
> The group's Gobind Das is of the lineage of a well-known family.
> He established an abode at Didwana; this limb of Hari has the
> power of bhakti.
> He made an appealing *Vani* (containing) wisdom, renunciation
> and warnings.
> In the words (of his) *sakhis* are the name and the qualities of Ram,
> not just his own ideas.
> To good men he gave an introduction to that light which is born
> from the body of Brahma.
> The very heart of the band of Dadu Dindayal worships Hari.

Of Dayaldas, the disciple and chargeman of Sundardas the Younger, who was also known as Boosar Sundardas, he writes:

522.
Boosar Sundardas had five famous disciples.
He gave the *tika* to Dayaldas, a great and brilliant pandit.
His intellect was immeasurable in the *shastras*, poetry, dictionaries, and grammar.

Of Balakram, he says:

524.
Dadu Dindayal's relative Balakram
Treated Brahma like just a fraction (of other deities).
His vain stubbornness was singular.
He (later) abandoned the other *devas*, and adhered to the one Parabrahma.
He created poetry of six stanzas, and later also *manohar* and *indav*.
He wrote *kundaliya* and *sakhis*,[163] which reproached those who turned their faces from bhakti.
Ragho says, eminent in the party of gurus are the names of Satguru Sundardas and Dadu Dindayal's relative Balakram.

He particularly singles out the literary works of Manu Das, Narsingh and Amardas, all described as "relatives' of Dadu:

526.
Dadu Dindayal's relative was the omniscient Manu Das.
He distributed many *Vanis* in which were the fame of the devotees of the divine guru, and the various classes of the earth.
(His book) *The Ocean of Virtues* was very enjoyable.
The first book studied in the panth, (it had) many verses and *sakhis*.
It describes the greatness of the Name, and has strings of words in praise of bhakti.
Ragho says, whoever approaches the state of the Lord obtains a deep experience.
Dadu Dindayal's relative was the omniscient Manu Das.

527.
Dadu Dindayal's two relations were both generous and understanding.
Narsingh performed his own bhakti, with love for Parameshwar.

[163] These are all names of poetic meters and poetic forms.

He composed *chappais* and *savaiyas*, and revealed ten faults.
The words of Amardas gave the spiritual secrets of the warrior.
He related longing mixed with love, the first tastes of pleasure.
Ragho says, I make an offering of devotion, remembering
these highest, most lovely Lords of Life.

Finally, Raghodas speaks of his own composition and with great humility assesses his own skill as a poet, admitting that he is not much of a writer, but does have an ear for "the meter of songs and poetry."

546.
Some don't know (how to play) the *bin*, only the *bin* player knows.[164]
Clearly he plays the 36 *ragas* and *raginis*.
The magician in his magic makes winged doves appear,
He displays the wicked nature of the male and female cobra
with a rope.

547.
Letters, meanings, meters as if (composed by) Vyasa, the glad *muni*.
My books are as if (written by) some poorly informed lad,
Who has come in shame to rave tremendously at the shameless.
Not distant is the shop of the base craftsman of iron.
A golden coin, a rupee, a precious stone appear worthless
without an assayer.
Having taken it and touched it, the banker (recognizes) it is good.
Ragho says, poets, scholars, *mahants*, *sants* (are like)
the waters of the ocean.
My measure is like this: a small pool of water lying amongst the rolling hills.

549.
Milk is taken from a cow, the hide is stripped from the linings
of meat.
As a goose picks out a pearl (from stones) in darkness
at the edge of the water,
As neighbors are adorned a thousand times with ornaments
from head to toe,
So, when gold is set aside, its value does not decrease even a whit.

[164] The *bin* is a wind instrument commonly used by snake charmers and some communities of folk musicians in Rajasthan.

Thus the famous five are described, not others who had no bhakti
in their hearts.
The dust of their feet is as a jewel on the forehead of Raghodas.

550.
In the heart of the poet, who is the standard of Pingal,[165]
there is nothing displeasing.
I choose and select the *shlokas*,
utilizing the knowledge of the poets.
I don't know how to join letters together,
(but) the meter of songs and poetry is something else.
A child says "*toti*" for "*roti*",
but people still understand what it signifies.
I have already forgotten the rise and fall of spoken language,
which has imperceptibly disappeared from me.[166]
Ragho says, Ram bestows knowledge upon all *sants* and *mahants*.

551.
Meter, arrangement, the assemblage of letters, are heard,
remembered and seen and so forth.
When there is a subtle remark without any further exposition,
then the speaker is chattering in vain,
A youth amusing the mad, a fool without discrimination.
I extract the faults of (other) poets, not knowing actually what I say.
Raghav is a petitioner who prays that he may be united with all.

In short, the society of sadhus described by Raghodas in the middle of the seventeenth century is one of highly literate men of predominantly Rajput origin who live or travel in small bands, who engage in composing and writing down devotional songs and poetry, who are conversant with poetic meters and figures of speech such as allegory. Their methods of devotion are diverse yet not particularly different from the methods of sadhus belonging to other traditions. They concentrate on and repeat the name of their guru, lineage founder, or a name of the Supreme God such as Ram or Hari. They sing *bhajans*. They place

[165] Pingal is the Rajasthani literary dialect of Braj Bhasha in which Raghodas writes.
[166] from this comment it can be inferred that Raghodas composed the *Bhaktamal* in his later years.

a great deal of value upon traditional sources of knowledge:

> Knowledge of *samkhya* yoga, karma yoga, *bhajans*, bhakti yoga,
> knowing the Vedas and *shastras*, this is the complete method.
> (BM 512)

They see literary composition as an integral part of their devotional path which will lead to liberation. Raghodas lyrically describes the process through which salvation can be obtained through one's devoted literary efforts when he says:

> Description is the drop, the couplet is water, the verse is the river,
> and Hari is the Ocean. (BM 360)

It was primarily through concentration on the production and reduplication of those literary forms, as well as other standard techniques of devotional meditation and concentration that liberation was to be obtained.

Mangaldas on Sundardas and origins of the lineage

The poetic verse of Raghodas offers an incomplete, yet at times vivid, portrait of the society of the devotees of Dadu as it developed in the fifty years after his death. In particular, it describes the society of renunciants of predominantly Rajput origin who became disciples of Prahladdas and Haridas, a society of renunciants about whom little more of substantive nature was recorded until the second half of the eighteenth century when the records of the the courts of Jaipur and Marwar began to reflect the interactions between the Dadupanthi Nagas and the Maharajas and their administrators. Records of the various erstwhile princely states available in the Rajasthan State Archives are virtually non-existent prior to the 1720s or even later. It was then that Sawai Jai Singh, following the Mughal pattern while establishing his government in the new capital city of Jaipur, established various royal departments (*karkhanas*), including those responsible for documenting

government interactions and for maintaining those documents (Erdman 1978, 345). From toward the end of the reign of Sawai Pratap Singh (1778-1803 CE) until 1918 CE, virtually every decree of the government and every interaction of the Maharaja with political, religious or other significant figures is recorded, resulting in literally thousands of documents which must be scanned in order to pick out the names of particular individuals, or those belonging to particulars sects such as the Dadu Panth.

Writing two hundred years after Raghodas, Mangaldas not only discusses in sometimes minute detail the history of the Nagas from 1755 CE until the mid-nineteenth century, but also exposes the changes in belief and praxis which had occurred since the time of Raghodas. For one thing, he indicates the increased emphasis upon ancestry and genealogy, presenting a much more detailed account of Sundardas which greatly emphasizes his Rajput origins, specifically his paternal origins from the Rathore clan and his maternal origins from the Kacchwahas. He begins his *Bansadipika*, however, with an account of the advent of Dadu in which he presents Dadu as not just an incarnation whose purpose was the spread of *nirgun* bhakti, but as one who had come to establish a lineage of warrior-*sants*. Mangaldas is referring to his own Naga lineage, that which was established by Sundardas and Prahladdas, a lineage of sadhus of predominantly Rajput origin.

> 2.1.
> Now I tell of my own avatar, who eliminated the burden
> of the earth,
> Dadu, who spread *nirgun* bhakti.
> ....
>
> 2.10.
> My heritage is (that of) the world-avatar, the spark who lights
> the fire,
> The father who made plentiful the men of a warrior nature,
> whose number cannot be counted.

2.11.
O my avatar, whose work is that of a lineage of warriors.
The Name of Dadu, which (is all that) remains of you,
is the shore (of the ocean of) *nirgun* bhakti.

2.12.
The task is the expansion of bhakti and elimination of sorrow
and poverty.
Recite this: Dadu is truly Hari, for he was compassionate to the poor.

Earlier, at the very beginning of *Bansadipika*, Mangaldas describes the conditions of the world of north India which called for the advent of Dadu, conditions that are specifically linked with the appearance of Muslims.

1.15.
In the beginning earth made a call for virtue.
(It was) heard by the unknowable (Alakh), called
the "giver of sorrow."
It happened that the Muslims appeared in the world.
All temples of the world were broken and destroyed.

1.16.
(There was) destruction in the world, and images were concealed.
No anointing, no presentation, no display.
No self-knowledge, no thought about Brahma.
All were viewed as *chamars*, idiots and farmers.

1.17
In this way, from the first Kali Yuga, the community which was
fragment(ed), which had concealed its manner (and dress),
began to come back to life.
Then it joined with another religious community (*sampraday*).[167]
In that party there was neither separation from nor union with Muslims.

1.18.

[167] It is unclear what these references refer to which mention an earlier religious community that was fragmented and that later joined another community in which there was "neither separation from nor union with Muslims."

Now at that time, Akbar was the ruler.
He (Dadu) came to support *nirgun* bhakti on the earth.
Possessing compassion, steadfastly he acquired disciples,
(Who had been) connected with Brahma, Shiva, Vishnu and the rest.

1.19.
All of the early devotees were divine, accomplished sadhus.
To the rest Hari gave eternal devotion.
No image or Veda or *puja* was known.
For them, there was nothing but the knowledge of *nirgun* bhakti.

Here Mangaldas presents a picture of Islamic iconoclasm which remains today in the discourse of many Dadupanthis. Today, often collapsing time and presenting an anachronistic argument, Dadupanthis and others argue that Dadu came to protect "Hindu dharma" from oppression by Muslims, an oppression that is often associated with the iconoclasm and anti-Hindu attitudes most frequently associated in their minds with the reign of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb (1658-1707 CE). Conveniently overlooked in these assertions are the facts that the rigidly fundamentalist Aurangzeb came to power some fifty years after Dadu's demise, and that the relative peace and prosperity which allowed the Dadupanthis to flourish was a direct benefit of Amer's friendly, even intimate, relations with the Mughals. Mangaldas' account indicates that the anti-Muslim feelings expressed in today's Dadupanthi discourse had already begun to develop, centered on ideas of the Islamic destruction and desecration of temples. His reference to the "concealing" of images, when they were not displayed or even anointed, must refer to the period in the latter decades of the seventeenth century when, fearing their destruction by the agents of Aurangzeb, Vaishnavas secretly removed the images of Sri Nathji, Govinddeva, and other images of Krishna from the highly vulnerable region around Vrindavan to the more protected regions of eastern and southern Rajputana.

Ironically, these regions were considered safer, places of refuge as it were, precisely because of their historic alliances with the Mughal court, alliances that had begun with Amer's alliance with Akbar in 1562 CE. The historian Satish Chandra (1993, 82) points out that Mirza Raja Jai Singh I of Amer (1621-1667 CE) was in regular correspondence with Aurangzeb since 1639, and that he regularly received favors from him. When Amer, Bundi, and Bikaner failed to join the so-called Rajput Rebellion of Mewar and Marwar against Aurangzeb after the Mughal occupation of Jodhpur following the death of Maharaja Jaswant Singh I in 1678, he made concessions to those states by adopting a policy of non-interference, particularly in religious matters. Even during the the latter decades of Aurangzeb's reign, his preoccupation with the Marathas in the Deccan and his need for Kacchwaha troops mitigated any possible inclination to interfere in their internal affairs. Hermann Goetz (1978) sees this as revision of his policy toward the Rajput states, a recognition that he needed the cooperation of some of the less antagonistic among them to keep the others in check. Mewar can also be included in those states with a relatively "protected status" after it concluded a treaty with the Mughals in 1781. As a result, according to Goetz, these states "became havens of refuge to Hindu religion, literature and science which experienced a renascence under Sawai Jai Singh (in Amer), Anup Singh (in Bikaner), Anirudh's successor Budh Singh (in Bundi) and the Ranas (of Mewar) Jai and Amar Singh II" (ibid., 48). As noted earlier, it was not just religious practitioners with their icons who sought refuge in Rajput states in the late seventeenth century, it was also artists, musicians, and scholars.

While presenting Islamic iconoclasm as, in effect, the direct cause for the appearance of Dadu and his message of *nirgun* bhakti, the sentiments of Mangaldas reflect not so much animosity as a sense of the discord and disruption in society caused by the attack upon Hindu values. The Mughal Emperor Akbar, noted for his broad-minded ecumenism, is treated

by Mangaldas as a well-intentioned, even saintly, personality whose positive reaction to his meeting with Dadu is used as a legitimating factor in asserting the latter's distinctive greatness. Even Bhim Singh, soon to become Sundardas, is depicted in the *Bansadipika* as honoring the Emperor when he takes leaves of him before traveling to Mathura, an episode not appearing in the earlier account of Raghodas:

> 5.48
> As Bhisma gave advice, so he (Bhim) too purified the Emperor.
> His mind filled with devotion, he lovingly worshipped his feet
> and performed circumambulation.

For Mangaldas, it is only the message of *nirgun* bhakti as delivered to the world by Dadu and transmitted to his disciples that can purify the land. It is only *nirgun* bhakti, in its origins devoid of image worship, Vedic teachings and *puja*, that can bring it back into balance.

In the fifth section of the *Bansadipika*, in which he introduces the line of *mahants* who succeeded to the *gaddi* of Dadu in Naraina, Mangaldas first introduces Sundardas as not only his "brother disciple," but also as the legitimate heir to the spiritual wealth of Dadu, whose successors are second only to the successors of Dadu at Naraina. He emphasizes the necessary abandonment of Sundardas' royal perquisites as a member of the ruling family of Bikaner by noting that his role as a guru who served *sants* "in the society of bhakti" constitutes his "second kingdom". Yet he also places him within a more orthodox tradition of ascetics in which knowledge of *shruti* and *smriti*, knowledge of both revealed and remembered texts, are qualifications for guruhood.

> 5.1.
> Hail to Dadu, a portion of Alakh, the guru who gathered
> his (spiritual) descendants around him.
> I, Mangal, praise my brother disciple and say that Sundar sits
> in the seat of the guru.

5.2.
Shruti, smriti, (spiritual) wealth, and deep wisdom are
the royal guru's second kingdom.
Mangal says that Hari incarnated in the society of bhakti to serve
the *sants*.

5.3.
I say that Dadu established the *gaddi*, then followed
Sundar's *thambha*.[168]
Mangal says, people of the world should remember
his praiseworthy name.

Illustrating an interest in genealogy and dating which developed among the Charan bards of Rajasthan, partially as a result of Mughal influence, he cites the date of Sundardas' birth in the fifth section of *Sundaroday* and in *Bansadipika* gives the date of his first meeting with Dadu.

Kalyan the future prince appeared from the daughter of
the King of Amer.
A *rishi* like Vishvamitra was caused to be born for the purpose
of bhakti.
In (VS) 1579, *phalgun sudi* 2, Bhimraj appeared.
The spread of bhakti was his responsibility.
(quoted in Mishra 1997, 128)

8.5.
On *phalgun sudi* 8, Thursday, 1600 and 26.
Sundar, whose manner and speech were like those of Jagdish,
became Dadu's disciple.

After introducing Sundardas in verses 5.1-5.3 of the *Bansadipika*, Mangaldas relates a legend about Rai Shyam, asserted to be the progenitor of the Rathore clan. In this story, which takes place in the forests of eastern India during the Dvapara Yuga, Rai Shyam comes

[168] Here Mangaldas seems to be saying that the position of Sundardas, both temporally and spiritually, is second only to that of Dadu.

upon the hermitage of an unnamed guru while hunting deer in the forest. It is a tale familiar from such well-known stories as that of Kalidasa's *Shakuntala*. Rai Shyam takes refuge with the guru who sends him, in a later incarnation in the Kali Yuga, to the guru's own reincarnated form in the person of Dadu.

5. 11.
Eight ports are said to be in the western region.
It was the country around Hoogali port where Dadu sang of Hari.
From living a luxurious life in the city, Rai Shyam went hunting.
Following the deer, the king came upon a hermitage and came face
to face with the guru.
To the animals and insects the forest the rishi was granting release.
With a second king of men, Pratap, Shyam sought refuge from
the guru.

5. 12.
By petitioning the guru's feet, Shyam succeeded in charming him.
The guru gave to both the Ram mantra, and they felt delight
drinking the *rasa* (of Ram mantra).
Taking with him the animals and insects, the guru released them
(gave them *mukti*).
On their heads he poured milk, honey and other auspicious things,
then on the bank (of the river) he recited (mantras)
over the bodies of the deserving ones.
At Hari's command, the guru made the disciples bearers of *nirgun*
bhakti in the Kali Yuga
The guru manifested as the son of a Nagar (Brahmin), revealed by an elderly
guru, and the disciple from Bikaner (became) a destroyer of time.

5. 13.
Shyam appeared as Bhim, in the excellent lineage called Rathore.
Among the disciples of Dadu, "King" Sundardas is the crown jewel,
the paragon.

This, then, becomes a way to introduce the Rathore lineage which in lines 5.14-5.18 is narrated in full from Prithviraj Rathore, the King of Kanauj, to the founding of the city of

Jodhpur by Rao Jodha in 1449 to Mangaldas' contemporary, Maharaja Takhat Singh (1843-1873) of Jodhpur (Gahalot 1991, 162-172).

> 5. 17.
> Gaj, Jaswant, Ajit, kings all, Bakht, from Vijay pride.
> Man (Singh), Takhat (Singh) of Jodhpur, Mangal recites
> the meritorious lineage.

Mangaldas then begins a recitation of the by now familiar exploits of Sundardas: his injury in the Battle of Kabul, his return and meeting with Prahlad, his renunciation, and finally his meeting with Dadu in Sambhar.

> 5. 32.
> Guru Dadu's royal disciple, Elder Sundar Rathore,
> Mangal says, the crown jewel of the Nagas, he wisely served
> Hari guru.
>
> ....
>
> 5. 42.
> (When) Shah Humayun attained paradise, Akbar (gained control of)
> throne and society.
> Bhim, who was gifted with the art of creating victories,
> attacked Kabul.
>
> 5. 43.
> Akbar did not believe that Kabul was a destroyer of men.
> King Bhim took his weapons, attacked, and the force
> was surrounded.
> He advanced little by little, (but) did not ask the Shah's army to
> accompany him.
> To the gates of Kabul he went, then stopped and fought at the entrance.
>
> 5. 44.
> With him, the lord of the royal lineage, the son of kings,
> were elephants and a powerful army.
> Bhim held responsibility to battle and defeat the enemies in Kabul.
> He engaged in battle, destroyed enemies and upheld dharma.
> Both battle and his fierce anger magnified his kingliness.
> A worthy king who shone on earth as he grasped land and estates.
> He was the charming head of the Rajput lineage of his home, Bikaner.

5.45.
He attacked the king and caused ruin in Kabul, when this force fought for two hours.[169]
So many common soldiers fled that the archers bore down upon the head (of the army).
When the soldiers had gone far way, as many as were killed and destroyed, that many more brought swords (into battle).
The soldiers all marveled at the enemy who brought pack animals loaded with swords onto the battlefield.

5.46.
The ruler of Kabul thus heard of the battle and abandoned the city.
All came to that gathering on foot, they brought their swords and laid them on the earth.
Several wounds were visible on the leader's body that flowed with terrible pus.
Mangal says, the people of the town joined together and all made pure the appearance of his form.

5.47.
In this way the king caused happiness and benefit, and (gained) the reputation in the world of king of kings.
That day the Emperor, who sometimes shamed various enemies, showed him limitless favor.
The entire society was united in satisfaction and well-being, the ship of bhakti (became) a vessel for their sins.
The man Bhim, who was graced by many good qualities, who was the paragon of all, took refuge in Braj.

5. 48.
As Bhisma gave advice, so he (Bhim) too purified the Emperor.
His mind filled with devotion, he lovingly worshipped his feet and performed circumambulation.

....

5. 55.
At the command of the divine guru, he was given saffron clothing, beard and hair[170] and Ram mantra (in the heart),

[169] Literally, two periods, or two periods of twenty-four minutes each.
[170] That is, beard and hair were kept long.

and he went to Bhairana.
The *rajpurohit* Prahlad came to that place looking for him,
and was given a position and told to serve Sundar.
Thus Prahlad, completely honoring Sundar, established Ghatra
and began internal meditation in devotion to Ram.
Performing *nirgun* meditation, warding off impurity,
Mangal says, his words were of desire for Brahma.

5. 56.
First he did *japa* at Bairath mountain,[171] as *japa* at Bhairana
had created thirst.
Then, in the northern mountains, he became absorbed in meditation,
Sundardas.

5. 57.
A man who spends time in solitude, in this way goes beyond
the *gunas*.
In firm meditation, striving with the mind, he attains complete love.

5. 58.
Sri Dadu Gurudev's disciples were 152.
"King" Sundardas was the first, the last was Sundardas the Younger.

5. 59.
For his many disciples, the state of Sri Guru Sundardas was a
profound mystery.
(When) he went to the northern mountains to worship Brahma,
the ruler of the *gaddi* was Prahlad.

5. 60.
It is auspicious to read and hear the *Vani* of Prahlad.
Mangal says, he met the possessor of Hari, and attained the state
of nirvana.

The narrative of Mangaldas about the exploits of Sundardas adheres to the basic story first related by Raghodas, but differs in several ways, notably in certain particulars and in the emphasis. For Raghodas, it was significant that Sundardas had forsaken the clear cultural

[171] In the northwestern part of present-day Alwar district of Rajasthan.

markers that distinguished him as a Rajput, for the true renunciant must also in theory renounce his caste affiliation and the concomitant social ties with family. Mangaldas, on the other hand, not only emphasizes the royal origins and military acumen of Bhim Singh but also mentions that when initiated by Dadu he kept the long hair and beard that would have identified him as a Rajput. There is no way to know the true hirsute condition of Sundardas, but it does appear that many of the Rajput disciples in his tradition during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries must have maintained their Rajput appearance, for it was during the tenure of Jaitram as Mahant of Naraina (1693-1732 CE) that the issue came to a head and caused a schism which was eventually resolved, but without any agreement on the part of the Nagas to change their appearance. Photos of Dadupanthi Nagas from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century show that most of them had beards, and the most popular image of Sundardas[172] depicts him with a long white beard and a massive, unruly head of hair.

Additionally, although Prahladdas is spoken of in glowing words by Mangaldas, it is really Haridas, a disciple of Prahlad and the younger brother of Raja Man Singh I of Amer by a female servant, who receives the highest praise. True, Haridas was praised for his spiritual accomplishments by his own disciple Raghodas, but Mangaldas focuses his praise more upon the royal Rajput heritage of Haridas than upon his personal qualities. As he had done earlier with Sundardas and his Rathore progenitors, so he does with Haridas and his Kacchwaha forbears.

For Mangaldas, the distinctiveness of the Dadupanthi Nagas is that they not only can trace a spiritual lineage back through Haridas (affectionately known as Happo or Happaji), Prahladdas, and Sundardas to Dadu (and ultimately his "guru" Brahma), but that they can also trace their lineage through the same line to Sundardas and the prestigious Rathores, and

[172] The original, probably produced in the mid-twentieth century, is in the small temple at Ghatra and is reproduced on the cover of R. L. Mishra's *Dadupanthi Naga Samuday* (1997).

to Haridas and the Kacchwahas, who are believed to have been descended from the kingly deity Ram through his son Kush. It is from the latter's name that Kacchwaha genealogists assert that the name of the lineage is linguistically linked. Thus, in the sixth chapter of *Bansadipika,* after six lines reviewing the account of Sundardas, the introduction of Haridas begins in line seven with an account of his family lineage and his position as lord of the "thirteenth *kotari.*" According to bardic sources, Raja Prithviraj Kacchwaha (1503-1527 CE) had nineteen sons of whom twelve survived to maturity.[173] He thus divided the territory of Amer into twelve appanages, or grants of land, which were individually assigned in perpetuity to the sons and their successors.[174] These then constituted the "twelve houses" (*kotari*) of the Kacchwahas who formed the highest aristocracy of the state (Sarkar 1984, 32). As the grantee of the thirteenth *kotari* some four generations later, Haridas thus would have become entitled to membership in this elite group.

6.1.
Sri Sundar was a leading general, his pedigree was famous
everywhere.
(He received) the gift of a small estate, all praise his pride.

6.2.
In all of the Kali Yuga, there have been ten avatars;
Vyasa watches over the ages.
Human avatars are a portion of Hari,
Dadu is the liberator of the world.

6.3.

[173] Mishra (1997, 120) points out that an account of the twelve *kotaris* created by Raja Prithviraj appears also in the *Nainsi ri Khyat,* composed by a Jain, Nainsi Jaimalot, and completed while he was serving as *divan* of Jodhpur between 1658-1666 CE (Ziegler 1976, 245). Mishra says that the tradition is that twelve of Prithviraj's nineteen sons survived to maturity, one "became a sadhu," and the others died without issue. The fact that one adopted the life of a sadhu indicates that it was not uncommon for a younger son in the royal family, such as Hari Singh and Shyam Singh later, to enter the ascetic life.
[174] Mandava (1985, 203-204) argues in his history of the Kacchwahas that, since Prithviraj had nineteen sons, it is unlikely that he created the twelve *kotaris.* It is much more likely, in his view, that they were established by Bharmal after his alliance with the Mughal Emperor Akbar had provided some degree of peace and security in the region.

Taking one water-pot and a little food, introducing and discussing
the Panth,
Guru Dadu and his party of followers. The greatness of this group
cannot be written.

6.4.
(There are) 52 *thambhas* where *mahants* reside; disciples listen to
everything they say.
In the panth, Sri Guru Dadu is called "guardian of
the four quarters".
Great guardian of the points of the compass is he called,
all people know this about him.
He incarnated (because of) this very vow, to imprint bhakti[175] even
more upon the earth.
In this is a description of Sundardas, one disciple in Ghatra.
Mangal says, it is the oldest, greatest *thambha*, the best group of
mahants. Hari resided in him (Sundar).

6.5.
In the country of the Hoogali coast, the royal king Sundardas,
Dwelling in the forest in the Dvapara Yuga, became the disciple
of Guru Dadu.

6.6.
The disciples of Guru Dadu are beyond calculation,
152 are celebrated.
Among them King Sundar is the eldest, he was the benefactor
of Prahlad.[176]

6.7.
Sundar the King brought to prominence the disciple prince,
the son of Bhagvat(das), the lord of Amer.
Of the *kotaris* his was thirteenth.

6.8.
Prithviraj was (King of) Amer, his son was Bharmal
who brought prosperity.

[175] The verb used here is *capna*, which is still used in the sense of block printing in the famous Jaipuri block printing centers of Sanganer and Bagru. Thus the vivid image is of Dadu imprinting bhakti upon the earth as one would use a carved wooden block dipped in dye to press a pattern upon cotton cloth.
[176] It should be noted that the earliest accounts of Dadu's disciples do not include Sundardas among the 152.

His (Bharmal's) son Bhagvatdas trusted and had faith in Dadu.
Bhagvat had eight sons, Man (Singh) succeeded to
the supreme throne.
Later, Madho Singh and (his) warriors (worshipped) Krishna.
The shining light of Prithvi(raj) was Happo, Hari Singh,
the son of a female servant.[177]
Mangal says, Happo was pleasing to the world. He abandoned
worldly enjoyment and became attached to bhakti.

6.9.
Happaji made a decision that service to Niranjan was pleasing.
In Ghatra he touched the feet of Prahlad, a second king of gurus.
Guru Dadu, Sundar and Prahlad were the very pillars.
His chosen one, Prahlad, made Hari (Singh) a disciple and gave him
instruction.
All the Rajput disciples of Haridas shown with an excellent radiance.
Mangal says, the *darbar* of Naga *avadhuts* sparkled with meritorious
devotion.

6.10.
Twelve *kotaris* were established by the King of Amer, Prithviraj.
He had four brothers and nineteen sons. The auspicious Bharmal
became worshipped as the king on the throne.
Thus Bhagvat(das) succeeded to the throne. He had eight sons and his
successor was Man (Singh), whose prowess was immeasurable.
Mangal says, the thirteenth *kotari* was established by Hari,
the disciple of the venerable Prahlad.

6.11.
Disciple by disciple, he gathered many together,
(then) Hari came to Amer.
(With) a wealth of wisdom, Raghodas later told the story.

6.12.
A large circle (of followers) adored Hari (Singh)

[177] Bhagwantdas had nine sons and two daughters from his thirteen queens and one concubine. Two of the sons, Haridas and Bhiko, were born of the concubine, Surati (Ratnawat 1981, 172). One of the daughters was married to Emperor Jahangir and gave birth to Prince Khusrau.

when he came to Amer.[178]
Directly they had a festival, then took Hari into the assembly of
the king, who sang the praises of his many, many virtues.
The twelve *kotaris* of Amer are Kacchwaha.
Hari (Singh), the devotee of the Lord Hari,
the thirteenth *kotari* is yours.
All met the savior of the clan, and said they would provide him
with food and clothing.
Mangal says, Hari the Lord was present in Hari (Singh),
who lived in a golden palace.

6.13.
(Where) Dadu meditated in Amer, (there was) the
darwaza of Hari.[179]
Man (Singh's) work for the devotees was (rebuilding)
an empty palace of the Rathores.
A group of 14 devotees (*sevaks*) bore bhakti in the ten directions.
An abode was offered to Haridas, so it was prepared at that time.
Hari guru was inquisitive and kingly. Man (Singh) offered him
many villages, but he didn't accept.
Mangal says, all clan brothers felt love for the King
and obeyed his commands.

6.14.
Dadu Dayal spread compassion. He broke apart the ocean of mud
surrounding the lake of the mind,
And made deserving those who came before him.

6.15.
The wandering party played the ceremonial drum;
for a long time the soldiers were immobile.
Man (Singh), saying, "Dadu is kind-hearted," took refuge
at that time.

[178] Mishra (1997, 121) writes, without giving any source, that the tradition is that Haridas wandered continuously for twelve years after his initiation before returning to Amer. The figure of twelve years recalls the twelve-year exiles of the epic warrior heroes Ramchandra and the Pandavas during which they were disguised as ascetics. The theme of twelve years of "warrior-asceticism" is common as well in the Rajput-oriented ballads throughout North India (Kolff 1990, 81; 1995, 266).

[179] The implication here is that Haridas initially stayed and held meetings at the site just opposite the Amber Fort in Amer where Dadu had lived for fourteen years. Later this was converted into a Dadudwara which still exists.

6.16.
Man (Singh) said, "The attachment of the heart increases when
all remember Dayal.
I take refuge with you to meet Hari, (for to be) absorbed in
the Lord Hari is gratifying."

6.17.
The rising sun is beautiful when seen in the reflection of the heart.
The Dadupanthi sadhu is the groom, the (householder) devotee
is attired for the marriage procession.

6.18.
Parabrahma takes his daughter, Bhakti, and joins her in marriage
to the *sant*.
Lakshmi said she would give a part of the dowry,
(which is) service to people.

6.19.
Maya makes use of the body to mix delusion with bhakti.
(We sadhus) always remain in the company of people,
creating literary works for their benefit.[180]

6.20.
We are always among those people who abandon the world,
but cling to delusion.
Sants abandon delusion in the blink of an eye,
(but) she (Maya) causes people to be attached to differences.

6.21.
Both brothers expressed themselves, introducing Hari (the Lord)
and discussing him with people.
Man (Singh) then spoke of supervising the Rajput lineage
of the kingdom.

6.22.
The Lord of Amer, being the first-born, the eldest, was attached
on this basis to an older chosen deity (*ishta devata*).
Nirgun and *sagun*, at root they are all joined like
(birds of the same) flock.

[180] Note that literary production continued to have an important place among the Nagas.

6.23.
The king took some of Amer. Regarding the rule of the *kotari*,
He gave his brother, who was honored for his fame,
the thirteenth *kotari*.

6.24.
On *kartik budi* 10, *Samvat* 1007,[181] Mangal says, there were 72 truly
prosperous branches to whom the kingdom was consecrated.
....

6.26.
A divine king incarnated, the kings of the world came to his feet.
The Minas were kept in servitude by the headman brother
of the king of Delhi.

6.27.
They were the Lords of Ayodhya, the place of Ramchandra,
(and) later took Prayag and Gwalior.
The best of men, the King, stabilized the land and later took Amer.

6.28.
Two *chakravartins* appeared, kings who ruled the whole earth.
Mangal says, the son of Dasaratha was Ramchandra,
the leader of all kings.
....

6.30.
In this manner they came to Amer, and kept expanding the kingdom.
Twelve *kotaris* were announced in the society of Man and Hari.

6.31.
The great Prithviraj was ruler of Amer. In Bikaner
the established ruler was Lunasi (Lunkaran).
Lunkaran's daughter married (the King of) Amer.
The Queen from the lineage of Bikaji was enthroned there.

6.32.
Twelve sons came, who are mentioned one by one.
Bhim, Balbhadra, Bharmal the king, Sango, Surtan,

[181] This refers to the date on which the Kacchwahas defeated the local Minas and assumed control of the region of Amer, then called Dhundar.

Sansmal the eldest.

6. 33.
Gopal the hero, Chatrabhuj the warrior, Jagmal,
Raimal of steadfast majesty,
Rudra and Puranmal. In this way the sons with many fine qualities
were servants of the Lord.

6. 35.
Bharmal obtained the throne of Amer. While moving about,
he had a spear thrown at him.
To the sound of "*Satyaram*!" he disregarded death.
The whole society heard of this marvelous play.

6. 36.
Seven years he ruled, taking responsibility for
(the kingdom's) welfare.
Bhagwat and Man were absorbed in Dadu.
When Bharmal became prominent, his brother was disappointed.
The descendants of Roop Singh (went to) live in Marwar.

6. 37.
From a Bikaner woman came Bharmal, a powerful man
who saved the lowly.
The 'elder sister' created twelve Rajputs;
the country was divided among her sons.

6. 38.
These 19 sons of Prithviraj bore the light from place to place and
established the Lord.
His clever brothers protected the four directions. The Kacchwaha
landlords (came from) our 'elder sister.'[182]

6. 48.
Man took delight in his brother Hari, (but was) a lukewarm disciple.
He (Hari) always retained one fort, (although)
25 villages were offered to him.
While journeying about and giving darshan to people,

[182] Mangaldas refers to the fact that Bharmal and the other eleven sons of Prithviraj, who became the land-holding Kacchwaha nobility of Amer, were all born from Prithviraj's wife who had come from Bikaner. A daughter of Rao Lunkaran, she would have been the paternal aunt of Bhim (Sundardas).

Hari (Singh) told (them) to worship Hari the Lord.
He met the king, who expressed the opinion that Shyam
should contentedly remain here (i.e., in Amer).
The king maintained Shyam, Chatur and Keval
(supplying them with) food and a guard.
Mangal says, Hridairam was a radiant sun who took pleasure
in the mendicant life.

6. 49.
So much for the story of Man and Hari. Man was Lord of the throne.
Maha Singh's son was the elder Jai Singh (I) the sympathetic.
Ram Singh, then Kisan[183] and Bishan, Jai Singh Sawai (II),
Madho Singh, Pratap, Jagat Singh and King Jai Singh (III).

6.50.
Chief of the Kacchwahas is Ram Singh,[184] all of whose good qualities
are unsurpassed in the world.
In his heart, he performs (acts of) remembrance, service, purity,
devoted to the highest truth of Hari.

6. 51.
Hail to the throne of the world most pure, Dadu,
the compassionate to the the needy.
Residing in a forest, remembering the hidden world,
the Lord of warriors offers an entreaty.

6. 54.
Of Jaipur's benefactor (Sawai) Jai Singh (II) I speak:
warrior, sacrificer, conqueror of enemies.
From place to place the worshipful warrior went,
inspiring extreme fear in the fortresses of others.

6. 55.
Jai Singh called a South Indian Brahmin to journey (to Jaipur)
and consider settling on land there.
The brahmin worshipped Indra at Gitor[185] and collected all the *sants*
together in a group.

[183] Ram Singh I was succeeded by his son Bishan Singh. There was no ruler of Amer named Kisan, so it may have been added for alliterative effect.
[184] Mangaldas' contemporary, Maharaja Sawai Ram Singh II (1835-1880 CE).
[185] A village south of Jaipur, near the town of Sanganer. It may also refer to Gaitor, on the northern edge of city of Jaipur, where the cenotaphs of its rulers are located.

He brought out some writing and allayed misfortune through this
sacred *yagya*.
Three crore rupees it cost, it is said. He revealed what is hidden and
brought prosperity.

In just fifty-five verses, Mangaldas lays out a good deal of the ideology of the Nagas as it had developed up to his time. Many important historical references are made here in passing: that the mother of Bharmal and eleven other sons of Prithviraj Kacchwaha was a Rathore woman from Bikaner,[186] a relative of Sundardas; that Haridas was born of a servant woman; that Man Singh refurbished an old Rathore palace for the use of disciples; that Hari Singh apparently first established the Darwaza, or Dwara, of Dadu in the spot opposite Amber Fort where Dadu had lived for fourteen years, and where the present-day Dadudwara still exists; that the Vedic sacrifice sponsored by Sawai Jai Singh was officiated by a South Indian Brahmin and cost a reported three crore rupees. The main thrust of this section of the *Bansadipika*, however, is to establish the close ties, both physical and emotional, between the early Dadupanthis--including Dadu himself--and the Kacchwaha kings of Amer.

In this regard, we are told that Rajas Bhagvatdas and Man Singh were "absorbed" in Dadu, and that the latter "took refuge" with him. Even earlier in the composition, in the third *tarang*, Mangaldas had referred to Bhagwatdas as "*adi bhakta*," that is, the first devotee who "expanded the lineage." We are told that, when Hari Singh returned to visit Amer with his disciples, described as Rajputs and Nagas who "shown with an excellent radiance" and "sparkled with meritorious devotion," he was greeted by his brother, Raja Man Singh, who offered him food, supplies and a comfortable, perhaps even luxurious, place to stay. Most importantly, Man Singh is said to have offered his brother a portion of the kingdom, the so-

[186] The Rajputs of Rajputana practice clan exogamy, so that a Rathore never marries a Rathore, a Kacchwaha never marries a Kacchwaha, and so on. This helps explain the often intricately tangled family trees of the Rajput dynasties.

called thirteenth *kotari*, consisting of at least 25 villages and a fort.

Although Hari Singh ultimately refused the gift, or most of it, Mangaldas sees the Nagas as the rightful inheritors of the prestige associated with that honor, an honor which would situate their status at a level equal to that of the highest aristocracy of the state. It was a position normally handed down to one's progeny. However, as an ascetic, Haridas had no actual sons, only "spiritual sons" in his lineage who asserted their claim to the status associated with members of the other twelve *kotaris* who comprised the nobility of Jaipur. Thus, from the time of Hari Singh and his nephew and disciple Shyam Singh, the Nagas' sense of their own spiritual lineage increasingly became interwoven with the lineage of the Kacchwaha Rajput rulers of Amer and Jaipur.

At the time of Mangaldas, the Dadupanthi Nagas had already divided into eleven distinct *akharas* subsumed within seven separate *jama'ats* (Mishra 1997, 141). True, they all traced the spiritual lineage back through the line of gurus and *mahants* to Sundardas and thence to Dadu, whom they believed to have been initiated directly by Brahma himself rather than any human guru. Yet they also acknowledged the family heritage of Sundardas and felt an affinity with the Rathore rulers of Bikaner. To an even greater degree they saw themselves as descended, through the lineage of Shyam Singh and Hari Singh, from the Kacchwaha rulers of Amer. Shyam Singh, who is first introduced in verse 6.48, is equally the great-grandson of Raja Bharmal of Amer (the son of a Rathore woman of Bikaner) and the great-grandson disciple of Sundardas (the son of a Kacchwaha woman of Amer). Thus, on the one hand lineage is traced back to Sundardas and Dadu, and on the other to Man Singh, Bharmal and ultimately Ram himself through his son Kush. In his account of the lineage of Kacchwaha kings, those who come in for particular praise are Bharmal, Bhagvatdas and Man Singh, then Jaipur's founder Sawai Jai Singh II and Mangaldas' contemporary Ram Singh II. Noticeably

absent from this list are Prithvi Singh (1768-1778 CE), who ruled for only a few years during his childhood, and Ishwari Singh (1743-1750 CE), who died an ignominious death after losing the battle over control of the throne to Sawai Madho Singh I, a supporter of the Nagas. Rather than indicating poetic license, the latter in particular would seem to have been ignored for distinctly political reasons for it was Madho Singh, Ishwari Singh's younger brother and competitor for the throne, who authorized the formal organization of the Dadupanthi Nagas.[187]

In many ways, reflecting the poetic style of the Charan bardic literature of the period, the verse of Mangaldas in *Bansadipika* is circular and repetitive. Themes and characters are introduced, reintroduced, summarized and resummarized. Thus the theme of the praiseworthiness of the Kacchwahas and Rathores is reprised at the end of the seventh *tarang*.

> 7.24.
> From Bikaner was the compassionate Bhim, son of King Jait.
> He won the battle of Kabul, and offered supreme renunciation
> completely to Dadu.
> He came from the Rathores, the lineage of his disciples
> was named Sundar.
> Hari, the son of Bhagvat(das), the King of Amer, told of him.
> The Rathores have 13 branches; the Lord of Jodhpur
> is the head of all.
> The Kacchwahas have 53 branches; the King of Amer
> is the head of all.
>
> 7.25.
> Mangal says, the Kacchwahas are worthy of honor,
> the King of Amer is their head.

[187] Although no direct mention is made of Sawai Madho Singh's involvement in the formal organization of the Dadupanthi Nagas at Galta in 1755, such an event taking place immediately beyond the gates of the city of Jaipur would not have escaped his notice. As was true in the time of Sawai Jai Singh II, such a large gathering for such a controversial purpose, which Mangaldas indicates also involved the other Vaishnava communities, would have required the approval, if not the direct participation, of the Maharaja.

Mangal says, Hari is our guru (who went) from place to place
(seated on) a leading elephant.

Significantly, a word frequently used by Mangaldas in referring to the relationship between the Nagas and the Maharajas of Jaipur, particularly Sawai Pratap Singh and Ram Singh II, is "*bhayap*," a Rajasthani word that can mean merely friend or brother, but more specifically refers to members of the same clan or *gotra* (Lalas 1986-87). Thus Mangaldas expresses the ideological feeling of the Nagas, themselves predominantly Rajput, who considered themselves to be related to the ruling family of Jaipur, and understood their fortunes to be intimately tied in with the fortunes (and misfortunes) of the princely state of Jaipur. This is a world view, as gleaned from the composition of Mangaldas, quite distinct from that of the sadhus within this lineage described by Raghodas in the seventeenth century. The development of a distinctive Rajput identity within the panth, its reliance upon association with Rajput royalty of the Rathore and Kacchwaha lines, and its ramifications for the praxis and ideology of the panth will be further discussed as the theme arises.

Shyamdas and his disciples

For now, it is important to further delineate points wherein Mangaldas' narrative moves beyond that of Raghodas. For Raghodas, the figure of Haridas, or Happaji, is at the apex of the line of gurus begun by Sundardas. For Mangaldas as well Haridas holds a singular position of spiritual authority. Yet, while Raghodas was enthralled by the spiritual personality and meditative powers of Haridas, Mangaldas is much more interested in his temporal position as brother of Raja Man Singh and lord of the "thirteenth *kotari*."

Both speak of the legacy of Haridas as expressed through his disciples. As one of the direct disciples of Haridas, Raghodas lauds a number of his brother sadhus. For Mangaldas,

however, there is only one disciple besides Raghodas who holds importance for the lineage: Shyamdas, said to be the son of Raja Man Singh[188] and thus the paternal nephew of Haridas. The sectarian accounts say that Shyamdas became a disciple of Haridas when the latter returned to visit his family in Amer; he then spent the remainder of his life in Amer at the insistence of his father, Man Singh. Worthy of note is the fact that the fighting Nagas of Mangaldas' account trace their lineage to Haridas solely through Shyamdas, and through no other disciples. Thus, other lineages founded by disciples of Haridas, even that of Raghodas, are not considered Nagas.[189] For this reason, the Nagas referred to themselves sometimes as Sundar Sena (the army of Sundar) and sometimes as Shyam Sena (the army of Shyam). Although he would have been well known to Raghodas, the latter only makes one brief, though significant, reference to him in the *Bhaktamal*. Commenting upon various important disciples of Dadu and other Dadupanthi gurus, he says:

> 511.
> In Dadu's panth, the skillful sadhu is praised.
> On the heavy wave of the Name, Nirandas brings auspiciousness.
> All limbs gloriously thrill to the naked Name.
> The one who is learned in the knowledge of Brahma becomes
> the protector of the incarnate souls.
> Masses of *bhajans* are performed at Galta on the beauty of Ram.
> The work of Shyam is to take the Nagas to the state of liberation
> of a heroic warrior.
> Those devotees who are obedient to his commands
> appear to be well-born.
> In this way, says Ragho, those with love for Ram are on the rise.

The last four lines are of consequence in several respects. Firstly, it is the first real use

[188] The Kacchwaha genealogies indicate that Raja Man Singh had between 22 and 31 queens, and had eleven sons and four daughters. Shyam Singh was the son of a Chauhan Rajput queen, Shyam Kanwar (Ratnawat 1981, 180).
[189] Many of those lineages founded by other disciples of Haridas eventually disappeared. It is possible that at least some of them merged at a later date with Naga lineages.

of the term "Naga" to describe the disciples of Shyamdas, who are said to be (at least those who are "obedient" or loyal) both warriors and well-born. In other words, they are themselves Rajputs from the upper levels of society. Another point of significance in these lines of Raghodas is the proximate association of Shyamdas and his disciples with Galta and the *bhajans* performed there on the qualities of Ram, for Galta was and is an important spiritual center of the Ramanandis. The deity most commonly worshipped by the Ramanandis of Galta and elsewhere was not the faceless, invisible *nirgun* Ram of Dadu, but rather Ramchandra, the avatar of Vishnu and hero of the *Ramayana*, a deity whose worship had been only recently repopularized by the vastly influential vernacular *Ramayana* of Tulsidas (1574 CE).[190] Thus, when Raghodas says that "those with love for Ram are on the rise," he seems to be referring to the incarnate Ram of the Ramanandis, and he seems as well to include the disciples of Shyamdas among his devotees. At the same time, he indicates that the lineage of Shyamdas had somehow already begun to incorporate a distinctive warrior ethos into their spiritual discipline. As there is some indication of of an early association between Ramanandi Nagas and those of the Dadu Panth, this may well have been how such an association began. At that time clear sectarian boundaries had not been established by either group and both groups would have contained a number of local Rajputs. Raghodas' account of the lineage ends circa 1660 CE, so only the account of Mangaldas throws light upon the developments occurring after that date. Shyamdas and his line of disciples are first introduced by Mangaldas in the context of his account of Haridas and Man Singh in the sixth *tarang* quoted earlier.

> 6.48.
> Man took delight in his brother Hari, (but was) a lukewarm disciple.

[190] This is not to deny that there may well have been Ramanandis who preferred to worship Ram in his invisible, *nirgun* form. However, that would only serve to emphasize the degree to which the interests of these two religious communities may have overlapped in the early seventeenth century.

He (Hari) always retained one fort, (although) 25 villages
were offered to him.
While journeying about and giving darshan to people,
Hari told (them) to worship the Lord Hari.
He met the king, who expressed the opinion that Shyam should
contentedly remain here (i.e., in Amer).
The king maintained Shyam, Chatur and Keval
(supplying them with) food and a guard.
Mangal says, Hridairam was a radiant sun who took pleasure in the
mendicant life.

The poet mentions the tradition that Man Singh had asked Haridas to allow Shyam to remain in Amer where his father provided provisions and even a guard. He further introduces the all-important lineage connecting Shyamdas with the Nagas of Mangaldas' era. Chaturdas was the only disciple of Shyamdas. In turn, his disciple was Keval who had one disciple, Hridairam. Keval and Hridairam are said to be not only the organizers of the Naga *jama'ats* at Galta in 1755, but they also were the leaders of the protest during the *mahant*-ship of Jaitram against removing the hair and beards that expressed their Rajput identities.

Whereas, at the time of Raghodas, Shyamdas was a figure who was known but apparently not of great significance, Mangaldas devotes an entire *tarang* to an account of Shyamdas and his lineage. He begins with an account of the disciples of Haridas.

8.1.
Sundar, King of Bikaner, the wise, pure holder of the *gaddi*.
It is accepted by other *mahants* that, of all the *thambhas*,
his is the greatest.

8.2.
Sundar's disciple was his relative, the very heart of the sons of
Bhagvat(das).[191]
The wandering disciple Happo saw brilliance in the thoughts
of Dayal.

8.3.

[191] Haridas' grandfather was Bharmal, whose maternal first cousin was Sundardas.

Man (Singh) petitioned Hari (Singh) to keep Shyam in Amer.
He accepted the thirteenth *kotari*, a venerable site in Dausa.[192]

8.4.
Supported by "Dadu Ram," one of Hariji's disciples, Uddhodas,
who was himself a shield of dharma, received the *tika*.
(Others were) Raghodas, Kalyan, Udaichand who obtained Ishvar,
and the youth Anand who was compassionate.
Shyamdas, Govind, Tursi(das), Hariram, Parvati Bai,[193]
who was pleased that her brother disciple received the *tika*,
The two Bhagwans, Krishna, Mohan, Magan, and Uddho who,
says Mangal, had an excellent upbringing and lived in Ajmer.

8.5.
Mangal says, I describe the *mahants* of the town of Hindaun.
Haridas, whose prasad was repetition (of the Name),
Uddhav, a completion of Hari (the Lord),
Parasuram - at his place, his work was to pulverize warriors
into dust.
His disciple Hridai practiced (reciting) the Name of Ram
every moment.
After that, Jogidas who desired Hari in the form of Krishna.[194]
Then Jairam, the priceless; (and) Lakshmandas, whose good qualities
were profound.
Mangal says, I describe the *mahants* of the town of Hindaun.

8.6.
In the lineage of Pipaji was Raghav(das) of the Changul gotra.
He composed the salvific *Bhaktamal*, his *Vani* is the radiant light
of Brahma.

8.7.
Raghodas of Karauli was a disciple of Haridas.
Vani, twelve disciples at his *thambha*,

[192] Swami Ramanand, a disciple of Swami Som Prakash, the *mahant* of Getolau at the edge of the town of Dausa, told me that he has a document of the land grant from Man Singh. This is reputed to be the site where Sundardas the younger met Dadu and was initiated by him, as described on a recently erected memorial there, but this could also have been the "venerable site in Dausa" granted to Haridas by Man Singh.
[193] Mangaldas only briefly mentions this female disciple of Haridas, as Raghodas had done previously.
[194] This is another indication that there were worshipers of Ram and Krishna among the Dadupanthis Nagas.

Kunjdas shone on his seat like another King Ram.
Mangal bows to Nandram and Hari Narayan.

Having presented a score or so of the disciples of Haridas, Mangaldas shifts his account to that of Shyamdas and his lineage, again emphasizing in verses 8.13 - 8.14 the direct line from Dasaratha, the father of Ramchandra, to Hridairam, who along with Kevalram is credited with organizing the armed Dadupanthi Nagas.

8.8.
Haridas' poetry was limited, (but) Hari guru was glorious
on the *gaddi*.
Shyam (composed) four *savaiyas*, say Mangal,
relating his desire for Hari, the Lord.

8.9.
Hari's men were of the *kotari*, Shyam and Chatur were in Amer.
Keval and Hridai were people of Ram (who) settled later in Jaipur.

8.10.
Shyam was a guru who had authority over Hari's men.
Chatur(das) was intelligent and applied himself to meditation
in the place at Amer.
Ramdas and Harivyas meditated on Hari guru in their hearts.
Shyam placed the *tika* on Chatur(das), who sang of Hari.

8.11.
Chaturdas pledged his seat to Kevalram.
Dharamdas and Dhandas shown completely with the light of bhakti.

8.12.
The King rules his own land; the *sant* rules everywhere.
In the assembly of Ram are Rajputs, in the assembly of the world
are (the) other kings.

8.13.
Dasaratha, the King of Ayodhya, ruled over the land of Bharata.
In Amer is a temple to his son and successor, Ramchandra.
Ramchandra had a younger son (Kush), by which they (i.e., his
descendants) are known as Kacchwahas.

Mangal says, Prithviraj is acknowledged to have created
the 12 *kotaris*.

8.14.
Prithviraj was succeeded on the throne by Bharmal,
who was conquered by bhakti.
(Then) Bhagvatdas (of the) *kotari* and Hari, the pure.
Haridas, then Shyam, Chatur(das), and Keval, and Hridairam.
This *kotari*, known as the thirteenth, did the work of Lord Hari.
It is said that most men in the *kotari* are from
the ruling society of the world.
Mangal says, the origin of kings is action,
the origin of *sants* is Brahma.

Not only does Mangaldas in this account trace the Kacchwaha lineage from Dasaratha and Ram to Hridairam and implicitly to himself, but he also expresses an ideology that sees Rajputs as categorically different than (and superior to) other kings and members of the Kshatriya caste, sees Kacchwahas as categorically different (and superior) due to their association with Ram, and ultimately sees Kacchwaha, Dadupanthi sadhus as superior to secular Rajputs.

He repeats the assertion of Raghodas that the disciples of Haridas were principally Rajputs. Hari's men were "of the *kotari*," meaning that they were not just Rajputs, but Kacchwaha Rajputs descended from the sons of Prithviraj Kacchwaha. Later, in verse 8.14, he says that most of the men in the thirteenth *kotari*, indicating the Dadupanthi lineage of Haridas and Shyamdas even up to the time of Hridairam, were "from the ruling society of the world," an indirect way of saying that they were Kshatriyas or, more specifically, Rajputs. Interestingly, it is difficult to tell in verse 8.9 whether Keval and Hridai are included as members of the *kotari*, that is, Kacchwahas, or whether they are contrasted as "people of Ram," which could be interpreted as "Kacchwahas descended from the lineage of

Ramchandra," "devotees of the *nirgun* 'Ram' of Dadu," or more specifically as men who were initially devotees of Ramchandra, i.e., Ramanandis. Since the first two definitions would apply to many of the sadhus in those lineages, but only Kevalram and Hridairam are singled out as "people of Ram," the latter interpretation would make a great deal of sense. Such an interpretation would certainly help to establish another possible connection between Ramanandi and Dadupanthi Nagas, a connection not explicitly made by Mangaldas. Later in this *tarang*, Mangaldas clearly identifies Chaturdas, Kevalram and Hridairam as Kshatriyas, if not Rajputs, referring to Chaturdas and Kevalram as "army men," and describing Hridairam as being "like a king."

Next occurs an interlude of sorts in which Mangaldas contrasts the interests and the scope of the powers of kings and sadhus. The gist of his contrasts between the ways of kings and the ways of sadhus is that sadhus are superior to kings in that they are responsible for humanity whereas the king is only responsible for his own subjects. He concludes that the sadhu is superior to both the king and the householder, since both the latter bow down to him.

> 8.20. ....
> The raja worships the feet of the *sant*, says Mangal,
> desiring prosperity.
>
> 8.21.
> The sadhu and the dutiful wife are the two pillars of the world,
> but the dutiful wife serves at the feet of the sadhu.
> Mangal says, the one who is liberated in life gives liberation,
> this is different than the (teachings of the) Vedas.

Mangaldas on the origins of military orders

The account of Raghodas ends in the mid-seventeenth century. Although Mangaldas

briefly traces the lineage of Shyamdas, he offers very little information about the activities of Shyamdas himself or his immediate disciple Chaturdas, beyond mentioning that they remained in Amer. It is only with the ensuing generations that he becomes more specific, going into considerable detail regarding the dress, attitude and practices of the Nagas after they were formally organized as an armed troop at Galta in 1755. Thus, there is a gap of approximately one hundred years during which there is no definite account of the activities of the Nagas, that is, the lineage of Shyamdas. Mangaldas credits Chaturdas' successor, Kevalram, and Kevalram's disciple Hridairam with not only establishing the armed Naga *jama'ats* in 1755 but also with earlier, during the period of Mahant Jaitram, causing the temporary schism in the panth by resisting some of the organizational reforms instituted by Jaitram regarding dress and appearance. Mangaldas associates them with this event in a couplet in *Sundaroday* quoted by Mishra (1997, 132).

> Keval and Hridairam said, "Listen northern *sants*,
> Though we perform endless feats, we will not shave our heads."[195]

Although many of those incidents mentioned by Mangaldas that occurred after 1755 CE are dated by him, or can be dated through other sources, little before 1755 can be accurately dated. In fact, we only know, from his reference in verse 8.9 quoted earlier, that Keval and Hridai moved from Amer to Jaipur, a move that would have occurred sometime after its founding in 1727 CE.

In Mangaldas' account of the military origins of the Dadupanthi Nagas, as related in *Bansadipika* and gleaned from some of the available passages from *Sundaroday* quoted in Mishra (1997), the first development in terms of organizing the Nagas occurred at the Galta

[195] The word used here is a Rajasthani word, *bhaddar*, which means *mundan*, or the ritual shaving of the head, but here refers as well to shaving of the beard or mustache, markers of Rajput identity. See Lalas 1986-87; Dave 1992, 59 .

meeting of 1755 CE.

> In *Samvat* 1812 they went to the Galta mela
> Their weapons and bodies were radiant;
> from the four quarters the mendicants arose
> (quoted in Mishra 1997, 132)

Initially, they must have returned to assert themselves in Naraina. In that same year, one faction of Nagas is traceable to Naraina where they unsuccessfully tried to install their own candidate, Gangaram, as the new Naraina Mahant (Thiel-Horstmann 1985a). Shortly thereafter, once Chainram had returned from exile in Marwar as the acknowledged mahant, the Ramanandi Mahant Balanand is said to have besieged Naraina with his armed Vaishnava *vairagis* ostensibly in an attempt to convert Chainram to the Ramanandi ideology, so it appears that the Dadupanthi Nagas, predominantly Rajputs, had by then begun to wander afield.

> 8.30.
> (To) the cities of Delhi, Lahore, Buxar and Multan.
> Kabul and Gandhara, Prayag, Kashmir, Bakhan.
> Ajmer, Agra, Ayodhya, and Gujarat should be counted.
> Cities in different parts (of the country) should be mentioned -
> Bihar, Bengal, Berar.
> Praise Malwa, Orccha, Burhanpur, and Aurangabad.
> Recognize Hyderabad and Patna, along with all the *subahs*.
>
> 8.31.
> Delhi, Udaipur, the Emperor caused the way of begging alms
> to increase.
> They roamed through 22 *subahs*, then came back
> and stayed in Amer.
>
> 8.32.
> In their minds an intention arose, (for) a division bearing arms.
> Their custom is to shout "Hari!" to the heavens.
> Prabhu is pleased by the Rajput lineage.

Their first major armed engagement is said to have been near Gwalior, when they were called upon to resist the atrocities of the armed Shaiva *sannyasis* of Umrao Giri, who had been attacking Vaishnava sadhus in the region of Braj. It may be recalled that Mital has attributed the organization of armed groups of Vaishnava sadhus by Mahant Balanand to this same root cause, namely depredations by armed Shaiva *sannyasis* in the region around Mathura, although it is generally asserted that these events occurred decades earlier than the events referred to by Mangaldas. Evidently there must have already been Vaishnava Nagas in the region, for they are said to have resisted the armed incursions of Ahmed Shah Abdali, who invaded India and looted the region around Mathura and Vrindaban in 1757 CE (Mital 1968, 360). Yet Mangaldas depicts the Dadupanthis as saviors who protected the defenseless and hapless Vaishnavas.

It may be recalled that Umrao Giri, the brother of Anup Giri, also known as Himmat Bahadur, had left military service in Awadh to join the service of the Jat Maharaja Jawahar Singh (1764-1768 CE) in Bharatpur, on the western borders of Braj. In late 1766 or early 1767, suspecting treachery on the part of the Naga *gosains*, Jawahar Singh attacked their camp and scattered them. Fleeing to safety, the Shaiva Nagas initially joined the Maratha army, then regrouped and are said to have launched a series of predatory attacks in 1767 throughout the region between Bundelkhand and Bharatpur, which included the region of Braj. According to Mangaldas, the Dadupanthi Nagas successfully drove Umrao Giri out of the area and were honored by the Vaishnavas and rewarded by Jawahar Singh.[196] Mishra notes that they may even have been involved in Jawahar Singh's surprise attack on the *sannyasi* camp for they are depicted as allies of Jawahar Singh in his description of their attack on Umrao Giri. Whether that was actually the case, or whether Mangaldas has conflated separate

[196] Narayandas (DPP 3:8-9) writes that Amardas, a disciple of Hridairam, was leading this Naga *akhara* at the time.

incidents, remains unclear. Yet either at the time of the initial attack on Umrao Giri or somewhat later during the year of 1767 they were rewarded by Jawahar Singh as reported by Mangaldas. Referring to lines from *Sundaroday* which are not specifically quoted, Mishra says that Jawahar Singh provided the Dadupanthis with five meals, some weapons and five thousand rupees (Mishra 1997, 158-159). He does quote the passage from the thirteenth *tarang* of *Sundaroday* which describes the supplication of the Vaishnavas, the attack on the camp of Umrao Giri, and the spoils they captured.

13.0
The *vairagis* of Govardhan town were scattered by the *sannyasis*.
The *sannyasis* showed no respect; the looters came and looted.
A force of 25,000 was nearby: cannon, infantry, horse.
The *sampradays* made a plea for the people of Dayal
to be their protectors.
They kept the loot themselves, cannon-bearing carts and elephants.
The Jats were well-equipped with weapons of four different kinds.
They spread out and made a forced march of 12 *kos*;
in the morning they surrounded the camp.
Approaching, the Sundar Sena fired arrows and awoke the army.
At dawn they made an attack on their supplies and quickly fell
upon them.
They drove away Umrao Giri and put an end to the levies on men.
In their hands they took away gold ingots, *howdas*, and an arsenal.
The *sampraday* joined Jawahar and the men of Sundar looted
the wealth of the camp.
(quoted in Mishra 1997, 145)

13.21.
The King of Bharatpur called for several of the most virtuous
and intelligent men.
Jawahar Mal said of the panth, "Sri Dadu is the essential Lord.
The *sannyasis* looted homes and the (Vaishnava) members of the
sampradays were always in hiding.
You create happiness for all and remove looting and destruction."
He said, "You will receive from the king whatever Ramji
the *bhandari* has in mind."
Saying 'Hail to Dayal,' all arose, Mangal says, then they marched off.

(quoted in Mishra 1997, 159)

Although Dadupanthi Nagas may have been directly employed as mercenaries by Jaipur State as early as the Battle of Sipra in 1769, the first recorded payments to them shows that they were compensated by Jaipur in 1771, during the reign of Prithvi Singh (1768-1778 CE) (Mishra 1997, 143). During the minority reign of the youthful Maharaja, the administration of the state was being controlled by his maternal grandfather, Rao Jaswant Singh of Deogarh in the state of Mewar. As an opponent of Maharana Ari Singh III (1761-1773 CE) and a supporter of Ratan Singh, a claimant to the throne of Mewar, he dispatched a troop of 15,000 Nagas under the command of his son to carry out plundering raids in Mewar (Somani 1985, 56). Dadupanthi Nagas were certainly among them, according to Mangaldas, though there may have been Ramanandi and Vishnuswami Naga mercenaries as well, for they are known to have been also employed by Jaipur at that time (Mishra 1997, 137-138). But it was during the reign of Prithvi Singh's younger brother Sawai Pratap Singh (1778-1803 CE) that the fortunes of the Dadupanthi Nagas rose. Mishra (Mishra 1997, 159) recounts that they were wandering near Chittor in the state of Mewar when they were called back to Jaipur by the Maharaja who had apparently heard of their prowess. A verse from *Sundaroday* quoted by Mishra (1997, 183) describes their first meeting:

> Those who came to Jaipur pleased Pratap;
> Brought to the court, their appearance pleased him.
> He had a document written and authorized, saying that
> They would be retained for five rupees each per month.

The fortunes of the Dadupanthi Nagas, described in the following verses of *Bansadipika* as Kacchwaha Rajputs, rose as they became significantly intertwined with those of the Kacchwaha state of Jaipur.

8.33.

Amer saw the protectors it had brought, army men bearing weapons.
Leading the advance to kill enemies, the Kacchwaha fighters
of the *kotari*,
The Kacchwaha fighters of the *kotari* of Hari's incomparable Shyam.
Chatur and Kevalram were army men, Hridai was like a king.
Amer was introduced to its protectors, (who) sought alms
from the world (while) handling state affairs.[197]
Mangal: King Pratap (Singh) maintained the fighters for protection.

8.34.
I've spoken of the *thambha* of Hari and Shyam, and the *puja*
in the *gurudwara* of Hari, the Lord.
Mangal says, Keval and Hridai created an army bearing weapons.

Kevalram had four disciples who who were renowned warriors: Mastram, Premdas, Jairamdas and Hridairam, his successor on the *gaddi*. Initially, there may have been only one *akhara*, although among the remaining Nagas today the accepted notion is that Kevalram is the founding father of the system of eleven *akharas*. It is more likely that, as the Nagas began to range over a wider territory and to meet military and financial success in the politically turbulent atmosphere of Rajputana in the late eighteenth century, their numbers multiplied and they divided into more and more *jama'ats* and *akharas*.[198] Most of these probably took their present form between about 1775 and 1825 CE, the period of greatest Naga ascendancy. Eventually, by the early or mid- nineteenth century, there were eleven *akharas* belonging to eight different *jama'ats*. Referring to their original geographic locations, the names of the *jama'ats* indicate that they were established on the eastern, northern and southern borders of Jaipur State. These were not only locations that controlled the borders against foreign

[197] Apparently Nagas continued to seek alms as they traveled about in search of mercenary employment.
[198] Each *akhara* was named after its founding *mahant*, whereas each *jama'at* has a geographic designation. jama'at Niwai and Akhara Gangaramji are coterminus and the Niwai Mahant, as he is called, is considered the leader of all Nagas. The *jama'at* has not been located in Niwai for well over a century, and the current Mahant, Ram Prasad, resides in Jaipur in Ramganj Bazaar.

invasion, but they were also regions where there were recalcitrant landlords and sometimes rebellious nobility whose opposition to the Jaipur *darbar* had first arisen in earnest during the minority reign of Sawai Prithvi Singh (1768-1778 CE).[199]

It is the opinion of Swami Surajandas, expressed in a commemorative booklet issued in the 1950s entitled *Dadupanthi Rajat Jayanti Granth*, that for decades the Nagas were wanderers who had no fixed abode, and that they first settled in Ramgarh (near Danta, to the northwest of the city of Jaipur) where there had been a good deal of civil disturbance caused by bandits. About 1833 CE many moved to Udaipur (also known as Udaipurwati) in the northern region of Shekhawati, a region known for its recalcitrant *thakurs*. Some Nagas were later sent to Chansen (home of the Chansen *jama'at*), between Diggi and Malpura on the southwestern borders of Jaipur State to put down disturbances by Thakur Megh Singh of Diggi. The *mahant* is then supposed to have moved from Chansen to Niwai around the year *Samvat* 1900 (1843 CE) where the Niwai *jama'at* was established (Mishra 1997, 141). Later, the Niwai *mahant* moved back to Jaipur to the *haveli* that had been built built for Mahant Santoshdas by Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh in 1786. In this scenario, the distribution of Naga mercenaries and establishment of certain *jama'ats* and fixed abodes came not during the period of invasions by the Marathas and neighboring states, but rather during the period between 1818 and 1857 CE when the greatest threat was civil rebellion by local Rajput *thakurs* who often failed to pay their taxes to the central administration.

All eleven *akharas* were initiated by disciples from the lineages of only two disciples

[199] Initially, many nobles were upset that the administration was in the control of Prithvi Singh's mother and conspired to overthrow the government (Sarkar 1984, 259-260). These tensions brought out open rivalries between various Kacchwaha factions such as the Nathawats, Shekhawats and Rajawats. One outcome was that Rao Raja Pratap Singh of Macheri was able to effectively declare the independence of Alwar from Jaipur (Saxena 1973, 265). During the reign of Sawai Pratap Singh, perceptions of his incompetence and luxurious lifestyle continued to fuel these resistance movements among the landholders of Jaipur. Such resentments continued to fester well into the nineteenth century.

of Kevalram, Hridairam and Jairamdas. Thus, all Nagas today trace their lineage to Kevalram through either Hridairam or Jairamdas, and thence through a single lineage from Kevalram to Chaturdas to Shyamdas to Prahladdas to Sundardas. In terms of numbers of direct disciples, one can detect the marked growth in the organization after 1755. Whereas Kevalram had only four disciples, Hridairam is said to have had twelve, and Jairamdas' sole disciple Asanand had sixteen, three of whom founded *akharas.*[200] By 1771, a directive from the Jaipur court for payment to Mahant Gangaram shows that he was accompanied by seven hundred sadhus, and a similar record of compensation to Mahant Santoshdas in *Samvat* 1857 (1800 CE) indicates that he was accompanied by 3116 individuals (Mishra 1997, 144).

For Mangaldas and other Nagas, the defining moment for the group came with the death of Mahant Mangaldas,[201] a disciple of Gangaram, and his *bhandari* Bishandas in the Battle of Khatu in 1780. In fact, most of the thirteenth *tarang* of Mangaldas' *Sundaroday* is devoted to an account of this one battle. In 1780 the Mughal Bakhshi, Mirza Najaf Khan, tired of unsuccessfully trying to collect promised arrears in taxes and tribute from Jaipur, ordered a two-pronged attack. One army, under the command of Mahbub Ali, came from the south and east, plundering Jaipur territory on the way and eventually besieging the city of Jaipur itself. At the same time, another force under the command of Murtaza Khan Bareech marched from the north, plundering in the regions of Narnaul and Shekhawati. By October, Bareech was about forty miles north of Jaipur near Shri Madhopur (Sarkar 1984, 264-266). Demanding tribute from Rao Raja Devi Singh of Sikar, he began to move toward that town northwest of Jaipur. The Rao Raja organized a defensive force, joined by other local Kacchwaha nobles including Thakur Pahar Singh of Dudu, located south of Naraina (Tikkiwal

[200] See Mishra 1997, 140 for specifics regarding the organization of the *akharas* and *jama'ats.*
[201] Mangaldas is still considered one of the key figures in Naga history. In late 1997, funded by Mahant Ram Prasad, work was completed on an extensive reconstruction of the *chhatri* marking the site of his death on the battlefield not far from the temple of Khatu Shyamji.

1974, 154-55). At that time the Dadupanthi Naga Mahant Mangaldas was in Dudu where he had been celebrating *chaturmas* as a guest of Pahar Singh. Jaipur's Maharaja, besieged within the city, asked him to participate in the defensive effort, offering him gifts of a shawl, a gold ring, a gold coin, and cash. Mangaldas, initially hesitant to get involved yet ultimately swayed by the argument that it was a matter of "public welfare" (*lok kalyan*), agreed and called upon other Nagas from Ghatra to join him. Tikkiwal (155) claims without any sources that 16,000 Nagas were involved in the battle, and some Dadupanthi sources claim as many as 40,000;[202] but Mishra's (1997, 161) figure of 1200 (of whom, by some accounts, only 500[203] survived) is probably more accurate. Mishra (1997, 160) quotes a passage from *Sundaroday*'s thirteenth *tarang* in which the poet Mangaldas describes the gathering of Dadupanthi and Naga forces for the battle.

> Mature *sants* from among the Northerners rose up;
> marching forth, men came to join daily.
> The charming *sants* from the lineage of Rajjab came forth,
> in this way the two brothers of Mohan came forth.[204]
> Those whom Mahant Mangal sent forth were from the *akharas*;
> radiant, sword-wielding warriors led the advance.
> Thus the army of Sundar marched forth and defeated in battle
> the army of Delhi which had been gathered from the 22 *subahs*.

Writing of the battle, Sarkar and other contemporary historians focus on the political meaning and fail to mention its proximity to the temple of Khatu Shyamji. On the other hand, Dadupanthi Naga accounts emphasize their own bravery and the aftermath of closer ties with the Jaipur court. Yet the defense of the temple of Khatu Shyamji, located so close to the

[202] The figure of 40,000 is given in *Digvijay Nagehay* (1925), a booklet published by the Niwai Mahant in *Samvat* 1972 containing accounts of several battles as well as copies of grants and other documents relating to Naga history.
[203] Mangaldas, in verse 13.12 of *Bansadipika* mentions only 36 deaths.
[204] Mangaldas asserts that armed sadhus from the among the Northerners (*uttaradhis*) and from the spiritual lineage of Rajjab also participated in the Battle of Khatu, suggesting that the Nagas were not the only armed Dadupanthi sadhus at that time.

battlefield, would have had symbolic as well as tactical significance for the Rajput men of the Dadupanthi Naga *jama'at*, for it was of great importance to local Rajputs. Although my Naga informants in Jaipur consistently referred to the temple as a "Krishna temple" and to the icon of Khatu Shyamji as "a form of Krishna," the latter bears no resemblance to other icons of Krishna and in fact resembles a turbaned and mustachioed Rajput king.

In their history of the temple, Jhabarmall and Shyam Sundar Sharma (1989) assert that the location and iconography of the temple are associated with the legend of Barbareek in the epic *Mahabharata*. In oral legends he is a great warrior, the son of Ghatotkach and the grandson of Bhima, who obtains the boon from Krishna that after he has beheaded himself at Krishna's request his head will be placed on a hilltop from which he can observe the battle at Kurukshetra.[205] Thus the temple is believed to have been established at the site from which his head ostensibly observed the rest of the battle. Moreover, Khatu Shyamji is an important *kul devata* of Rajputs, especially those from the adjacent territories of Sikar and Shekhawati, and the hereditary *pujaris* of the temple are exclusively Chauhan Rajputs (Sharma 1989). Alf Hiltebeitel (1999, 430) concludes that the stories of Barbareek as contained in many versions of the north Indian folk *Mahabharata* "have circulated primarily in Rajput milieus, and especially among 'littler' Rajput clans and populations." He adds that Barbareek is "an exemplary Rajput hero: ready to fight for either side, but especially the underdog; inordinately proud of his strength, yet willing to sacrifice its use; firm in his adherence to the Rajput code of honor..." Most Rajputs in the region would thus have been aware of the importance of the temple to Rajput ideology. Among accounts of the Battle of Khatu Shyamji, this significance of the temple to local Rajputs is indicated only in that of Narendra

[205] This is but one variant of the widely distributed folk tale. See Chapter 12 of Hiltebeitel 1999 for an analysis of this and other versions.

Singh, the Kacchwaha *thakur* of Jobner,[206] in *Thirty Decisive Battles of Jaipur* (1939, 223) in which he writes:

> The battle ensued vigorously where the Rajpoots fought desperately to achieve double purpose. Firstly, their hearths and homes were to be kept safe, and secondly, they were, like the medieval crusaders, to preserve at all cost the sanctity of the holy and the most famous temple of Shyamji (Shree Krishna Bhagwan) which was situated at Khatu.

The temple had apparently been damaged during the reign of Aurangzeb, one of the few temples in the state of Amer to suffer such depredations. Richard Eaton (2000, 131), in his essay "Temple Desecration and Indo-Muslim States" lists only two temples in the area desecrated by Muslims during the reign of Aurangzeb: a temple at Khandela attacked in 1679 CE, and one in Sambhar attacked in 1697-98 CE. As Khatu is only a few kilometers from Khandela, in the present-day Sikar district of Rajasthan, it is conceivable that the temple of Khatu Shyamji was damaged at the same time.[207] According to the inscription on the outer walls of the temple, the renovation of the temple and the (re)installation and consecration of the icon of Khatu Shyamji was begun during the reign of Sawai Jai Singh II on *phalgun sudi* 7, VS 1777 (1720 CE) (Mishra 1991b, 95-96). The local Kacchwaha and especially Shekhawat Rajputs among the Nagas with Mahant Mangaldas at Dudu would certainly have been aware of the significance, both actual and symbolic, of protecting the temple and its vicinity from an attack by the Mughal armies. In the passage from *Bansadipika* below, Mangaldas traces the lineage to which his earlier namesake belonged, recounts the history of the Dadupanthi Nagas, and sets the stage for the *mahant*'s heroic death at Khatu.

[206] Jobner is a small town located east of Sambhar Lake, about 25 kilometers northeast of Naraina.
[207] Significantly, G. D. Sharma (Sharma 1973, 220-231) relates that Abu Tarab, the imperial agent involved in destruction of temples in Amer in 1679-80, indicated that he had no difficulty demolishing a number of temples with only one exception. At one temple, he records, armed Rajputs defended the temple and it was "not before all the Rajputs had been killed" that the temple could be demolished. The temple and its location are not recorded, but it may well have been the temple of Khatu Shyamji.

10.3
The red-turbaned immortal force roamed from region to region.
The Jaipur king created a mela at the Dadudwara.
The Lord of Jaipur created an army of four parts.
Bearing weapons, the entire Rajput lineage was pleasing to Prabhu.
They afflicted and destroyed the religious community
of Umrao Giri.
Mangal says, the army of Dayal expanded the kingdom
and increased their wealth.

10.4.
Guru Laldas gave shelter to his disciple, the sober Gangaram.
To Mukund Das he gave a state of bliss,
to Tulsi a place of meditation.

10.5.
Gangaram's disciples were Kasidas, Mangal(das), Khemdas and
Haribansadas, who attained liberation.
Sesdas, Keshav(das), Uddhodas and Dharmadas, who were servants
of the *sant* Hari(das), became abodes of prosperity.
The highest was Bilasdas, then the wealthy Malukdas, Inchyadas,
and Jogidas, who practiced (the repetition of) Ishvar.
Mangal: reminiscent of Ram and Lakshman's absorption in Hari,
Rupdas, who was engrossed in Ram, was a radiant light.

10.6.
Gangaram, who had deep wisdom, had disciples in the 22 *subahs*.
Having both *sagun* and *nirgun* opinions, he made a throne
for Jagdish.[208]

10.7.
To Guru Gangaram's position went the disciple of Uddhav.
On the *gaddi* was Mangaldasji, who ascended by popular assent.

10.8.
Mahant Mangal, lord of the world, fought with
the dark-skinned army.[209]
King Pratap, the protector of the land, brought protection to Amer.

[208] Apparently, some Dadupanthis such as Gangaram (*florit* 1771 CE) openly held *sagun* ideas, that is, they believed in worshiping images of the deity.
[209] The reference here is not clear.

10.9
The memorable, meritorious, intelligent warrior, Mahant Mangal,
fought at Khatu and was killed.

10.10.
He (Pratap Singh) gave to Udai the *tilak* and the *pargana*
of Kaman near the border of Bhataneri
So that (there would be) no uprising by the Jats.
Maharaja Pratap called him to fight on the field of Khatu.
He gave him the (symbolic) spear of Samalpur and control
of Chimapur.
It happened at Neem ka Thana, the people of Hari
on mountainous elephants.
Jodha (i.e., Jodhpur) won the battle, and gave (them) elephants
and the *pargana* of Khadela (in *jagir*).

Much of the thirteenth *tarang* of the missing *Sundaroday*, and parts of the fourteenth, are devoted to an account of the momentous Battle of Khatu. Mishra only includes a few passages, but they give a sense of the detail and tone of that composition as compared with the more laudatory and epigramatic style of the *Bansadipika*.

News was sent of Bareech, they heard that the force coming
was powerful.
The Turks concentrated on their swords,
on the field stood the Rajputs.
Muskets and arrows were fired, curved swords swept,
cannon fired with fearsome sound.
Firing arrows, the *jama'at* caused havoc among the (enemy) force.
(quoted in Mishra 1997, 184)

14.57-58
Murtaza Ali came before them and said. "We are remiss, you are
the light of Allah."[210]
Then the force went on foot up to all the Rajput brothers.
Mangal says, Guru Bishan's time was next day.
His head was cut off at Khatu battle, in (*Samvat*)1800 and 36.

[210] McGregor defines this (*allah ka nur*) in *The Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary* (1993) as referring either to "a very beautiful person" or, contrarily and ironically, to "a very ugly person."

In the month of *savan*, in an honorable victory in the battle,
Bishan met the Lord.
The leader of the *jama'at*, the *bhandari*, the beloved of Daduram,
Maintained his attitude and his honor when he met Hari.
I bow to Bishan who conquered time.
(quoted in Mishra 1997, 184)

This description is echoed in two short couplets of the *Bansadipika*:

13.12.
Heads were cut off at the Khatu battle, 36 lost their lives there.
In the sacred victory in the battle in the month of *savan*,
Bishan met Jagdish.

13.13.
The *bhandari's* whole face was quivering with love for Dadu Ram.
Maintaining this appearance, he met Hari. The famous Bishan conquered time.

Despite their losses, and despite the fact that most of the Kacchwaha soldiers recruited from the region are reputed to have fled the battlefield, the Nagas inflicted heavy losses on the army of Murtaza Khan and forced him to withdraw. Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh was so impressed by the valor of the Dadupanthi Nagas led by Mahant Mangaldas that he bestowed many gifts upon his successor, Mahant Santoshdas, including the village of Chimapur and in 1786 CE a *haveli* in Ramganj Bazaar in the walled city of Jaipur, where Niwai Mahant Ram Prasad still resides. Most importantly, he began to offer regular paid employment to the Dadupanthi mercenaries in the army of Jaipur as did other kingdoms such as Jodhpur, Kota and Bundi.

10.11.
The *gurudwara* at Samalpur was offered to the *jama'at*.
Mahant Santoshdas obtained a copper-plate (title to a) portion
of Chimapur.

10.12.
They stayed with the Rana (of Mewar) and with Boleray in Bundi.

Mangal says, they expanded the kingdom of Kota and (then)
all came to Jaipur.

10.13.
(They got) two to five rupees a day, and sixty was set aside.
Mahant Chain(ram)ji took an army when Jodhpur offered
seven (rupees a day).

10.14.
Man (Singh) created victory for Jodhpur, the distress-causing
elephants came.
Chainramji obtained a staff and all obtained honor and glory.

10.15.
Guru Laldas, whose own *mahant* was Gangaram,
was *mahant* of his own (*thambha*).
His (Gangaram's) disciple Mangal(das), holder of the seat,
defeated the party from Delhi in battle.
Parasuram's acquaintance and disciple was the 'king' of Palri.
Mahant Santoshdas supported a mela for all.
There were certainly Kacchwahas and Shekhawats
in the four-part Shyam Sena.
Mangal: The leader of the Kacchwaha protectors loved the land
and destroyed its enemies.[211]

10.16.
The Jaipur king, Lord of the world, loved Mahant Santoshdas.
He secretly loved him as a brother and worshipped him as an
incarnation of Hari.
The army leader (i.e., Santoshdas) shown like a diadem,
a king of kings.
Giving to the poor was the task of those connected to Swami's party.
On that day the king gave up tooth-cleaning, the *dhuni* fire,
food and contact with his relations.
Without a question, the king gave them swords and an allowance
every morning.

10.17.

[211] The "protectors" are clearly stated to be Kacchwaha; the leader would be either Mangaldas or his successor Santoshdas, a *thakur* from Palri. Further, the force of Dadupanthi Nagas, here referred to as Shyam Sena, is said to be constituted of both Kacchwahas and Shekhawats, a related clan.

Ram Singh appealed to the entire world and told them
to appear in Kota.
The *jama'at* halted at Sikar, (for) the ruler of Sikar followed
the path of the warriors.

10.18.
The army of Jodhpur remained focused and forced Mir Khan
out of Jaipur.
You are disgraced, Kacchwahas, and will become dwellers
in the lowest hell![212]

10.19.
You have forsaken love of the land, and attachment
to your forefathers.
Offspring of kings, you behaved in a vile and fearful manner.

10.20.
Among the *kotaris*, the thirteenth, worthy of worship,
is that of Sundar.
Swami (Sundar)'s *thambha* is great due to its tradition
of reverence and refuge.
No one should ignore the command of the rulers of Amer.
In all directions they (Nagas) roamed fearlessly,
with their chosen one, Dadu, in their hearts.
Renouncing karma, chanting (the name of) Parabrahma
in their hearts.
Mangal says, all good qualities are connected with the Nagas,
whose leader is the most important deity.

10.21.
Other Kacchwaha people (thought) in this way, (that) the *mahant*
is a saint (*muni*) who controls his mental desires.
The state of Santosh, felt Pratap, is that of a generous,
priceless *mahant*.
In his *thambha*, Govinddas, highest of Rajput princes, is revered.
Gunigdas and Mahant Gopal(das) meditate on Mohan Hari.
The devotee most worthy of worship in the world,
(who occupied) the excellent and glorious seat of Shyam,

[212] This apparently refers not only to the ignominious retreat of ordinary Kacchwahas at the Battle of Khatu, but also to their reputation for cowardice, particularly among the Rathores of Jodhpur who consider themselves superior warriors.

Mangaldas, the giver of compassion, obtained victory over Nirakar.
....

10.25.
Hridairam's seat it is said, is that of a glorious kingly *mahant*.
The strength of that *jama'at* is unequaled in the world,
Mangal says, it pleased the king.

Only after the martyrdom at Khatu of Mahant Mangaldas and his *bhandari*, Bishan, did the Nagas begin to enjoy regular patronage from the state of Jaipur. It is to this relationship and the patronage of Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh that they attribute their rapid rise in both prestige and wealth, an attitude clearly expressed in the passage in *Bansadipika* in which the organization of the Nagas is compared to a "majestic mint" constructed for them by the Maharaja.

11.23.
Worshipful people created 68 *tirthas* as they desired.
Hansdasji worshipped Hari through *tapas*, meritorious action,
remembrance and recitation.
(Performing) ascetic practices, meritorious acts, remembrance
and recitation, the *jama'ats* were sent to wander the world.
Steadfast Vrindabandas sang the merits of the profits acquired.
Benidas, who had great goodness, met with Khyaliram.
The immortal (Maharaja Sawai) Pratap (Singh) had built
a majestic mint!

The developing reputation of the Dadupanthi Nagas

The Dadupanthi Nagas participated in a number of significant battles against the Marathas and Mughals during the latter decades of the eighteenth century: at the Battle of Lalsot in 1787 when the Marathas were forced to flee; 4000 at the Battle of Patan in 1790 (Singh 1939, 259); 3000 at the Battle of Fatehpur in 1798 (Singh 1939, 286). In 1800 CE, at the Battle of Malpura southwest of the city of Jaipur, the Marathas were opposed by a

Jaipur army of 927,000 men, of whom "ten thousand were Rohillas and the rest Rajputs and Nagas" (Sharma 1969, 218). They were also involved in Jaipur's siege of Jodhpur in 1807 CE during which they were at one point attacked at night and driven away by one of the Rathore nobles (Ojha 1997, II: 791). Yet Mishra rightly asserts that they were probably of greatest value to Jaipur in putting down local rebellions and, especially during the first half of the nineteenth century, in collecting taxes. He writes:

> During the time of Maharaja (Sawai) Pratap Singh (1778-1803 CE) a regular amount of *bhent* (offerings) and homage being given to the Nagas, the arrangement was made for them to remain in Jaipur on a permanent basis. At that time a number of *sardars* (chieftains) had stopped paying taxes. The treasury began to be depleted because of the halt in this source of income of the state. Conversely, Emperor Sham Alam II (1759-1806 CE) similarly began to insist upon (payment of) tribute. In these circumstances, these Naga sadhus were chiefly used to suppress the (local) *thakurs* (Mishra 1997, 167-168).

As an example, he cites of the attack upon Salahdipura, the stronghold of the Khandela clan of Kacchwaha Rajputs. The fort was surrounded, besieged, and finally occupied on *jyesth budi* 14, *Samvat* 1854 (1797 CE) by the forces of Jaipur, including a large contingent of Dadupanthi Nagas. In the same year, according to Mishra, they participated in suppressing rebellious elements in Gangashram, Jhilai, Niwai, Piplada, Paya, Chugavasa and other villages. During the Battle of Fatehpur in 1798 the army of Jaipur was victorious, though at the cost of many casualties, in dislodging the combined forces of the Maratha general Vaman Rao, the European adventurer George Thomas, and many "disloyal *thakurs*" of Jaipur (Saxena 1973, 166). It was a problem that continued to manifest throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. Documents from the Kapad Dwara collection of Jaipur (Bahura 1988) include over one hundred *kharitas* from British officials to Maji Sahiba (the *de facto* regent) just from the two-year period of 1830-1832 CE in which they complained about

robbery and plundering by various armed groups, mostly at the edges of Jaipur territory in such localities as Shekhawati, Tonk, Ranthambor, and Sawai Madhopur. While many of these may well have been robbers as such, a number of them were also rebellious Rajput *thakurs*.

The Nagas were well-compensated, receiving not only salaries of three to seven rupees per man per day, but often supplies of food and weapons as well. In addition, the *mahants* received gifts of land and buildings, gold, jewels, cloth and so on. Many of these are recorded in the *Dastur Komwar*, the book of protocol of the Jaipur court. By the end of the century the Dadupanthi Nagas had become regular fixtures in the army of Jaipur; and by the last year of Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh's reign (1801-02 CE), the Jaipur army consisted of 13,000 infantry, 700 cavalry, and 4,000 Nagas, the majority of them Dadupanthis (Gahalot 1966, 127).

During the time following their organization, some groups of Nagas had continued to travel widely, going wherever they were called to fight for whomever would offer them compensation. Many of their battles involved internecine warfare among the princes and *thakurs* of Rajputana rather than between Rajputs and the Marathas or Mughals. Here and there, in records and accounts from throughout the region, Nagas...sometimes identified by sectarian affiliation, sometimes not...are referred to as having been present at battles or to have been engaged in raiding. For example, in September, 1770 there were reports of Naga attacks near the temple town of Nathdwara in the state of Mewar. Later, in April 1771, 10,000 Nagas from Jaipur (many of whom would have been Dadupanthis) were confronted by the Maharana of Mewar at Gangrar and several *mahants* were killed in the ensuing battle. Leaving that region, the Nagas began raiding in the territory of Kankaroli (Somani 1985, 56-57).

Throughout much of the remaining verses of the *Bansadipika*, in which he recounts

the significant individuals within the Dadupanthi Naga tradition, Mangaldas makes references, sometimes detailed, sometimes obscure, to their travels and mercenary activities. In many cases, it is not just their loyalty and fighting ability that was appreciated, but the spiritual and even miraculous powers traditionally attributed to ascetics in the culture of India. Initially, much of their work beyond Jaipur was in Bundi and Kota, Rajput states in east-central Rajputana. Later they were hired elsewhere, though there is no evidence that they ever fought on behalf of the Marathas; their patrons were almost entirely Rajput.[213] *Sundaroday*, which appears less concerned with tracing the lineage, is more concerned with the details of patronage and battle. In one verse from the poem, Mangaldas describes the visit to their camp of Boleray, the Raja of Bundi, and what ensued; in a later verse he speaks of their spreading fame.

> 15.2
> Boleray met the soldiers in camp and offered a *dupatta* as prasad.
> He saw the light of the warriors of the *jama'at*,
>   and recalled the unskilled enemies.
> He employed the group, gave *bhent*, and counted those in attendance.
> (He gave) each individual 5 rupees and some food.
>   It was pleasing to them.
> Jogidas showed his accomplishments by granting Boleray a son.
> Mangal says, the King became his disciple and gave the command
>   (to give him) a string of elephants.
> (quoted in Mishra 1997, 163)
>
> 15.23
> They scattered Umrao Giri, looted him and caused destruction.

[213]Although many of the mercenary, and even regular, armies of this period contained a motley collection of Rajputs, Brahmans, Jats, Telenganas, Purbia Muslims, Rohilla Afghans, Sikhs, Europeans, and Nagas of various persuasions, the Dadupanthi Nagas were apparently disinclined to sell their services to the Marathas. It is uncertain whether this was due to a sense of loyalty, ideological differences, or other reasons. It is interesting to note, however, that Kacchwahas in particular were obviously discouraged from joining the Maratha armies. In a *kharita* dated April 19, 1756 CE the Maratha *subedar* Jankhoji Scindia promised Maharaja Sawai Madho Singh I of Jaipur that, in accordance with a recent treaty, no Kacchwaha would be taken into Maratha service without the express permission of the Maharaja.

> They were in several Jaipur battles, and laid low the party
> of the (Mughal) Emperor.
> They traveled to Kota, were called, and came to Amer.
> When there was peace (in the kingdom of) Boleray,
> then they appeared in other provinces.
> Later, the Rajput brothers fought battles for the Rana (of Udaipur).
> Mangal says, with every difficulty in Bundi and Jodhpur,
> their fame spread.
> (quoted in Mishra 1997, 164)

Although it may be an overstatement when Mangaldas thus cites the increasing fame and glory of the Dadupanthi Nagas, it is true that the records of at least several of the princely states contain frequent references to their presence and to their interactions with the royal courts. For Jaipur, these are recorded in Volume Eighteen of the *Dastur Komwar*, the official Jaipur record of interactions between the Maharajas of Jaipur and various religious figures, which details numerous such occasions of interaction by the Maharajas and their representatives with *mahants* and sadhus of the Dadu Panth and other, mostly Vaishnava, traditions. In some instances the sectarian affiliation is not mentioned, but frequently the individual mentioned is described by affiliation as either Dadupanthi, Dadupanthi Naga, Ramanandi, Vishnuswami and so on. For the most part, these documents briefly describe meetings between such religious figures and the Maharaja, and record the *bhent*, or gifts ritually offered. The latter often consisted of *mohars*, or gold coins, as well as gifts of food, cloth, and occasionally land. In return, *mahants* would normally offer a *dupatta*, or symbolic scarf, as a gift to the Maharaja. It is a pattern continued to this day between *mahants* and important personages from the political or business worlds, with the *mahant* receiving gifts of rupees and reciprocating with a specially made *dupatta*. It was common for Rajput Maharajas to send greetings on ceremonial occasions, to be present at the installation of a new *mahant*, to send foodstuffs on the occasion of festivals, and so on. For the Dadupanthis, the courts of

Jaipur and Jodhpur for over two centuries annually provided food (referred to in official documents as *rasoi*, or kitchen) for the annual mela at Naraina.

The *Dastur Komwar* records scores of such interactions between the Maharajas and Dadupanthi sadhus and *mahants* between 1757 and 1857 CE. The records of other gifts and awards to sadhus and *mahants* are confirmed only in the tattered documents they often still possess, such as the grant of a *jagir* worth 2500 rupees per year given to an *uttaradhi mahant* by the Jaipur Maharaja in 1832 CE. That document, and another granting him 21 *bighas* of land near Jaipur's Kishanpol Gate, just beyond Ram Niwas Garden, is still in the possession of Mahant Kailashdas,[214] the present-day holder of the *gaddi*. Undoubtedly, a perusal of the voluminous records of other princely states, maintained in the Rajasthan State Archives in Bikaner, would indicate similar patterns of interaction and patronage. Pemaram (1976, 40-48) lists numerous grants of land, revenues and *rasois* (food provided for melas) offered by the courts of Amer, Bikaner and Jodhpur as early as *Samvat* 1709 (1652 CE) when Swamis Sevadas and Narayandas were given 201 bighas of land in *qasba* Narayanpur by the administration in Amer (p.43).[215] The earliest such grant he lists from Jodhpur is *Samvat* 1724 (1667 CE). In his volume on the bhakti movement in medieval Rajasthan, Pemaram states that the collection of *sanad parwana bahis* from the princely state of Jodhpur which are maintained in the collection of the State Archives contains many more references to gifts of land, food and other items offered to Dadupanthi sadhus by the Jodhpur court (Pemaram 1977). A few examples I was able to collect from the thousands of entries in the archive's

[214] The land, once beyond the gates of the city, is now in the heart of prime real estate in modern Jaipur. Sixteen *bighas* were sold for a considerable amount some decades ago, but Mahant Kailashdas still owns five *bighas*, which contain a high-walled garden surrounding the *chhatri* of Mahant Govinddas. Oddly, this peaceful nook now sits neglected behind an amusement park called Wonderland.

[215] Roy (1978, 70) has noted that, at the time of Independence, there were 5,534 religious *jagirs* in Jaipur State alone, and that there were ten times as many in all of Rajasthan.

collection of Jodhpur *bahis* will serve to illustrate the nature of these interactions:

No. 56, p. 47
Dated *magh sudi* 9, *somwar, Samvat* 1859 (1802 CE), *pargana* Merta
In the month of *phalgun*, Swami Nirbhairam the Dadupanthi will celebrate a mela for which the Jodhpur *darbar* will provide food.

No. 56, p. 57
Dated *magh sudi* 9, *somwar, Samvat* 1859 (1802 CE), *pargana* Merta
The Dadupanthi Sevak Ram of village Dit should obtain one rupee from every household of the village. This is the renewal of a previous order.

No. 58, p.7
Dated *bhadva sudi* 4, *budhwar, Samvat* 1862 (1805 CE), *pargana* Jodhpur
The *pota chela* (second-generation disciple) of Mahant Chainram named Khumandas, while in the forces of the Dhano Rao, was struck by a bullet which injured his eye. For this (injury) he should receive every year from the district court five rupees for clothing and food. A copy of this decree should be made and given to him.

No. 58, p. 26
Dated *bhadva sudi* 3, *guruwar, Samvat* 1862 (1805 CE), Barkat Sagar
Dadupanthi Mahants Santoshdas, Chainram and others, having arrived today, should immediately be given a gift of fine cloth of a value of twenty rupees, one to each man. Immediately buy these and offer them. Make no mistake! Don't delay, so that they might join the military forces and not be excluded.

Not all records of interactions between the Dadupanthi Naga sadhus and the courts and governments of the princely states were concerned with matters of remuneration and patronage, however, as indicated by an account of an altercation, really more of a brawl, between what appear to have been Niranjani Nagas and Dadupanthi Nagas.

No. 56, p. 804
Date: *magh sudi* 9, *somwar, Samvat* 1859 (1802 CE), *pargana* Didwana place: Jodhpur Fort
There was a dispute between Niranjanis and Dadupanthis in the middle of a

> *mela* to which a government official (*hakim kotwal*) had gone. Someone pulled out a pole of a *pandal* and tried to attack a *chela* (a disciple of one of the leaders). No one was injured, otherwise there would have been a bigger fight. As some food was ruined, a fight began around the *pandal* which was dirtied and torn by the ascetics. Let it be arranged that supplies be given to a tailor to sew a new one. This is an order of the court.

The matter seems not to have ended there, for a later missive regarding the same incident, indicates that a number of charges must have been leveled against each other by the parties involved.

> No. 56, p. 81
> Date: *phalgun sudi* 6, *raviwar, Samvat* 1859 (1802 CE),
> *pargana* Didwana
> There is a special complaint regarding an altercation raised between Dadupanthis and Niranjanis. In accordance with the appropriate laws, the matter should be heard in the proper court in which all officials are included and each charge is submitted.

Such squabbles between competing groups of Vaishnava and neo-Vaishnava Nagas were probably increasingly common as they established patterns of patronage with particular courts and established a military presence within particular districts. Two *jama'ats* of Nimbark Nagas were headquartered north of the city of Jaipur at Neem ka Thana, and Jaipur State did occasionally employ them as well as armed Ramanandi *vairagis* (Mishra 1997, 141), but by far the majority of its armed mercenary sadhus after 1780 CE were Dadupanthis. So predominant were they that they became virtually identified with Jaipur after the Battle of Khatu and into the twentieth century, frequently being mentioned in the context of Jaipur in various gazetteers from the late nineteenth century and even in the influential *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (Hastings 1955). Similarly, Jodhpur predominantly employed as many as four *jama'ats* of Vishnuswami Nagas along with the occasional Ramanandi (Mishra 1997, 137-38). Yet another verse from *Sundaroday* indicates

that Jodhpur was still hiring Dadupanthi Nagas during the reign of Maharaja Man Singh (1803-1843 CE), a fact further confirmed by the Jodhpur *bahi* of 1805 CE cited above which mentions Mahant Santoshdas and others coming to join the military forces of Jodhpur.

> 16.86.
> Man (Singh),[216] the King of Jodhpur, gave 7000 rupees.
> Great vigor arose in the force. They danced (in) the *darbar* of Dadu.
> In Jaipur, the king on the throne summoned them to come.
> Raichand, the minister, agreed to seventy.
> Along with the minister Jhootharam,[217] he abandoned all doubts.
> The *jama'at* of warriors (came from) two directions
> and met at Ranthambor Fort, unashamed of their attire.

Among often generous salaries, grants of land, gifts from royalty and commoners, and what they could take in booty or simply through coercion, many of the *mahants* accumulated tremendous wealth. Orr summarizes the expansion of the Nagas and the growth of their fortunes, noting the thousands who were kept under the Maharaja's pay from the late eighteenth century until their eventual disbandment in 1938 CE, and indicating the manner in which the *mahants* used those accumulated funds to develop additional sources of income.

> Some 7000 Dadupanthis were kept almost constantly employed by Maharaja Pratap Singh of Jaipur and his successor, in suppressing revolt, and collecting revenue. Their wealth rapidly grew, and they began to do a large business as tax-farmers and money-lenders, and were able to pay down very large sums in cash to meet the demands of an ever-exhausted State Treasury (Orr 1940, 93-94).

Indeed, by the early nineteenth century some of the Dadupanthi *mahants* were among the wealthiest men in the state. The Niwai Mahant Ram Prasad, displaying the relevant documents, confirmed this when he proudly told me that one of his predecessors on the

[216] Maharaja Man Singh of Jodhpur (1803-1843 CE).

[217] During the minority reign of Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh III (1819-1835), his mother served as regent and the chief minister was a Jain, Jhootharam Sanghi. Raichand may have been one of his brothers whom he appointed to high positions in the administration. When the boy ruler died suddenly in 1835, there were rumors that he had been poisoned by Jhootharam (Roy 1978, 188). See also Hanuman Sharma's history of Jaipur (1996, 262) originally published in 1937 as *Nathawaton ka Itihas*.

gaddi had even loaned a large sum of money at quite a high rate of interest to Maharaja Jagat Singh of Jaipur (1803-1818 CE) at a time when the state was short of cash due to Maratha demands for tribute.[218] Mahant Kailashdas, an *uttaradhi* whose large *haveli* is in Tripolia Bazaar near the Jaipur City Palace, related that one of his predecessors, Mahant Jugaldas, had similarly loaned ten lakh (one million) rupees to Maharaja Ram Singh II (1835-1880 CE).[219] Even today, money-lending continues to be a valuable source of income for Ram Prasad, Kailashdas and several other *mahants* with whom I met. Others, including the Naraina *mahants*, have used their wealth to purchase residential and commercial properties that they rent out for profit. None of this was apparently uncommon among Dadupanthi *mahants*, for they are described in the gazetteers with a phrase which keeps reappearing in descriptions of them: "money-lenders and very strict with their debtors" (Erskine 1909, 92).[220]

Such vocations among sadhus were hardly unique to the Dadupanthis. Bernard Cohn (Cohn 1964, 175-182) has shown that Shaiva ascetics were important commercial traders in north India during the eighteenth century; and Christopher Bayly has added that "(b)y the 1780s, the ascetic sects seem to have comprised the dominant money-lending and property-owning group in Allahabad, Benares and Mirzapur" (Bayly 1992, 143). Indeed, the widespread movement of bands of ascetics as they traveled from one pilgrimage destination to another on the Indian subcontinent had long allowed them to develop trading networks, and it may well have been competition over control of trade, trade routes, and pilgrimage centers that exacerbated the tensions between the various groups of armed sadhus in the

[218] Personal communication, January 30, 1998.
[219] Personal communication, July 14, 1998.
[220] The popular reputation of Dadupanthis vis-a-vis sadhus of other sects is clearly evidenced by a ditty quoted in the 1891 Marwar Census Report (1997, 305) which goes:

> Those who want wealth and Maya wish to become Dadupanthis.
> Those who want to enjoy the senses go and follow the yogi......
> Those who want to trade in sweets should become devout Niranjanis.
> Those who want to consume fine meals wish to become Ramsnehis.

eighteenth century, particularly between those of Shaiva and Vaishnava persuasion.[221] Even as late as 1789 CE there was an armed clash between the two factions at the site of the Kumbha Mela in Nasik in which 12,000 are said to have died (Burghart 1996, 126-127).

Of course, Mangaldas does not discuss these business aspects of Naga practice in his accounts, making only one oblique reference to Nagas who "became like Vaishyas," i.e., businessmen. Historically, there was relatively little need for mercenaries after Jaipur's treaty of 1818 with the British East India Company. Primarily, they were still used to put down rebellious *thakurs* and to collect taxes due to the state, itself a profitable pursuit. As Richard Fox has explained in his analysis of the phases of development in the Rajput state, the true elite in the latter stages of Rajput state development that characterized Jaipur in the nineteenth century were those appointed to collect state revenues. Once they were given revenue collection rights over a specific territory, "state power was transmitted to the local area through these personages," giving them tremendous power that was not easy to resist (Fox 1971, 104). This would have been doubly true since the Dadupanthi Nagas were also "religious" figures whom many people would have been loathe to confront. They developed a reputation, still foremost in the minds of many Rajasthani villagers but one denied by Nagas themselves, for intimidation, forced extraction of revenues, even kidnapping. Writing of the "oppressive feudal system" imposed upon the peasantry of Jaipur State, B. K. Sharma refers to this view when he cites the traditions that "poor cultivators often paid large sums of land revenue by pawning their sons and daughters to money-lenders or selling their sons to Dadupanthi Sadhus" (Sharma 1990, 118-119). As Stewart Gordon has noted, the difference between tax collection and dacoity "was, and is, largely perceptual" (Gordon 1971, 220).

Toward the end of *Bansadipika*, Mangaldas acknowledges this reputation and some of

[221] See Burghart 1983a.

the more unsavory acts of the Nagas, saying that their reputation had been spoiled by acts of robbery and intimidation (*thagi*), that one group had unconscionably murdered fasting members of the Nimbark community of Vaishnavas, that they had ignored the authority of the Naraina Mahant, the latter lapse clearly considered a serious offense at the time. He further indicates that, due to conflicts among the *thambhas*, some had been essentially thrown out and had become impoverished, after which they made unreasonable written demands for supplies of food and money.

14.52.
The state of happiness of the brothers was destroyed,
and (they) led the lineage into *thagi*.
Mangal says, it (sank) so low, that respect was never given.

14.53.
One hundred brothers conquered and slaughtered the fasting
Nimavats[222] of Jaipur,
By which they were pleased, but Ram Bakshi was distressed
in his heart.
In 1880 (1823 CE) it happened that they were pleased.
Jaipur is the place where the *jama'ats* were shown compassion
and given shelter.
Mangal: it is said that they were given a system of 52 *thambhas*.

14.54.
Wandering and begging in the four directions, (but) the Swami
(of Naraina) didn't give permission.
The Dadupanthi *jama'ats* took no orders from him.
The big *thambhas* suppressed the little ones and spread out
from that place.
All the places of the *kotari* were written (about), read (about)
and recited.
Those left without a master wrote and demanded
a perpetual supply of food.
(They) demanded thousands of rupees. Mangal says,
this is not the way of our panth.

[222] That is, Nimbark sadhus.

14.55.
The *gaddi* in the town of Naraina does not give permission
to the *jama'ats*
(To be) demanding, reprehensible thieves, robbers and fools,
says Mangal.

14.56.
In places of the panth, people understand (about) punishing
the body severely.
Mangal says, the lowly give wealth to the sadhus,
and honor to the *sants*.

The Nagas during the British era

The Maratha incursions that had plagued Jaipur and the other princely states of Jaipur for more than half a century came to an end with the signing of a treaty of alliance with the British in 1818 CE (Sarkar 1984, 315-329). For almost thirty years, the Maharajas of Jaipur had viewed such an alliance as the only way to rid themselves of the Maratha menace (Tikkiwal 1974, 176). They had even signed a treaty with the Marquess Wellesley in 1803, and in early 1804 assisted the British army in driving away a Maratha force led by Holkar, but that agreement was later repudiated by Lord Cornwallis, the new Governor-General. But later, after considerable negotiation about how much the virtually bankrupt State of Jaipur would subsidize the British for their intervention, a new treaty was signed in 1818 and a new era without external military threats began for both Jaipur and the Nagas.

Gradually, the British began to exercise more and more control over the state as one minor regent after another ascended the throne of Jaipur. As they did so, the relative position of the Dadupanthi Nagas seems to have declined, at least in the estimation of Mangaldas. Certainly thousands continued to receive salaries from the state until well into the twentieth century, but their influence in the court seems to have suffered. He sounds almost wistful at

times as he looks back at the hundred years of glory of the Naga *jama'ats* and compares them to the situation circa 1860 CE.

12.13
Hail to Keval's disciples, the protectors of the four directions,
In the tradition of Jairam, Hridai, Mast and Prem they meditate
together on the inner heart.
Gradually (acquiring) all wisdom, these Nagas became
like businessmen (*vaishyas*),
Mangal says, these Nagas who serve (Dadu) Dindayal
get a great share for their own benefit.

12.14
The Naga adorns himself with a jewel in the form of Hari,
pearls, coral and many clothes.
Mangal says, worshiping Hari, he gave up women
and met the Niranjan king.

12.15
In (VS) 1915 (1857-58 CE) "King" Ram Singh gave the command.
Weary of (a life of) pleasure, he made a vow and brought payment
(literally, revenues) and a staff.

12.16
He changed the direction of the world, (so that) the *varnashrama*
contains (only) two paths.
The king listens to the *Angrez* (English), (but) worships
his skilled clan-brothers.

12.17
In battle, the sepoy is called "*bhayap*" by the king,
who sees (in them) his true relatives.
Every day in Amer is seen the quality of the enemy-killing *jama'ats*.

12.18
When the troops return, you do not hear of war and acquiring *jagirs*.
The king hears what the Nagas say, "May Hari preserve Pratap!"

12.19
Firing bullets as they advance, Mangal says, the way is fiery hot!

In fourteen battles of Jaipur, the *Angrez* withdrew and retreated.

12.20
Appearing in glory, they brought weapons for the tasks
of the King of Amer.
Mangal says, Maharaja Pratap wanted more for the work of ruling.

12.21
The king looked in the direction of his sepoy brothers (*bhayap*),
called the *mahant*,
And forcefully said, "Look here, you speak to all the *sants*."
"You tell all the *sants*." The four *jama'ats* responded,
"You see, King, to assemble in battle and destroy enemies
is (just) play."
Then the Raja's heart was delighted as they went forward
to meet (in battle).
Mangal says, The Arab took all his companions with him
to the afterlife.[223]

12.22
They went first as the king's companions, the *bhayaps*' time
had come.
Mangal says, from this country to that (roamed) the party
of "*jauhar*",[224] the auspicious society of Shyam.

12.23.
Keval's disciples are called his descendants,
whose *jama'ats* are clothed in virtue.
(Now) the time of the English has come, (but for us)
the Kacchwaha is clan-brother and king.

Again and again Mangaldas emphasizes the unique "brotherly" relationship he views as having existed between the Dadupanthi Nagas, the "society of Shyam," and the Kacchwaha Maharajas of Jaipur. As "*bhayaps*," a term usually used only in reference to

[223] Verses 12.21-12.22 refer to the period surrounding the Battle of Khatu. The Arab would be Bareech, who was not killed in the battle.
[224] *Jauhar* is the strictly Rajput rite of battle to the death, often with the Rajput warriors symbolically clad in saffron, particularly following the self-immolation of women and children in a militarily hopeless situation.

members of the same Rajput clan, a certain understanding and loyalty is seen to exist between the Nagas and, in this instance, Maharaja Sawai Ram Singh II. It is not just loyalty, but a commitment to common values, to a Rajput ethos, based upon the perception of deep family ties sustained by the evidence of constructed genealogies. They are the "clan brothers" and "true relatives" of the Maharaja. While many of the Dadupanthi Nagas were indeed Kacchwaha Rajputs with perhaps distant blood ties to the royal family, the perceived relationship lauded by Mangaldas is based more upon their membership in the thirteenth *kotari*, the imagined community of the disciples of Haridas, born Hari Singh Kacchwaha, than upon the actual bonds of family. Yet what Mangaldas describes is the ethos of *bhaibhandh*, the brotherly tie between close relations in the male line upon whom one could always depend (Ziegler 1976, 240). As he recounts the famed *mahants* of the Sundar Sena, the Naga lineage of Sundardas, and locates them and their *thambhas* within the territory of Jaipur State, Mangaldas implicitly constructs an isomorphic relationship between them and Jaipur. This, in fact, recalls the earlier stages of Rajput clan formation when the clan and the territory were coterminus (Fox 1971, 31). At earlier times such an identification of the clan and the state was, in the words of Anil Banerjee, "the most characteristic feature of the medieval Rajput polity" (Banerjee 1982, 110).

13.1.
He took the form of true Niranjan, Dadu avatar.
Sundar (had) skill, Dayal devotion, and Prahlad radiance
without blemish.
Hari in the form of Vishnu nurtures and protects the world.
Devotees, those in the lineage of Raghav(das), give expression
to the divine.
Shyamdas, a form of Shiva, himself gave the riches of recitation,
ascetic practice, and yoga.
Mangal says, Constantly meditating upon the divine guru
opens the treasury of love and service.

13.2.
Twelve glorious Naga *mahants*, *sants* who were reverent
and truthful.
A glorious sun shines in that lovely place on the *gaddi* of Ganga.
Like a bright sun in the sky is Nanhuram who occupies the post
of Amar(das).
Like a living sun was Harikesh at Maniram's place.
(There was) contented Asanand, the great, powerful head
of Mahant Samwal's court.
Shiva's light (was) Baliramji and Ramkrishan kept Hari in his heart.
....

13.5.
The place of the *thambha* of elder Sundar Das is limitless.
Mangal says, fifteen *mahants* are said to be bound to his pure name.

13.6.
In Ghatra, Prahlad occupied the seat of Swami Sundar.
In Hari(das)'s *thambha* in Hindaun, Uddhodas was the guiding light.
Ragho in Karauli, contented Shyam in Amer,
Chain and Keval's boy Hridai were residents of Jaipur.

13.7.
Baliram and Ramkrishan remember Hari in Sawardai.
Chainram's place is in the neighborhood of the Dadudwara
(in Naraina).
Girdhar(das) and Prem(das) live in Sawai Jaipur, Mukund(das)
and Daya(ram), who are the likenesses of Santosh,
live in Naraina village.

13.8.
Sri Sundar's *thambha* was dispersed, the many *thambhas*
became ships of the world.
Where there is one light of Hari, (there) is the work of my lineage.

Mangaldas seems to be hearkening back to an earlier time, a time when clan and family relations were somehow more certain. For the Nagas, everything had changed with the arrival of the British. It is not entirely clear from the context what the poet means when he says

(12.16) that the *varnashrama*, meaning the *varnashramadharma* or classical system of the socio-religious duties of the four castes in the four stages of life, now contains only two paths; but it was perceived as a radical new formulation which "changed the direction of the world" and which came about because the "king listens to the *Angrez*." How is one to understand, except as a lament for the golden years of Naga supremacy and their receipt of patronage, Mangaldas' complaint that the time of the "*bhayaps*" is no more. For, although the Nagas still insisted upon considering the Kacchwaha Maharaja of Jaipur to be "clan-brother and king," there was no denying that "the time of the English" (12.23) had indeed come.

The British had found the Nagas to be ill-trained, backward, even recalcitrant. Banerjee summarizes the opinion expressed by the noted Indian historian J. N. Sarkar in his *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, no doubt the view held by the British at the time, that the Rajput armies were no match for the weapons and tactics of the Maratha armies primarily because of the opium consumption of the Rajputs and the overall indolence of the Nagas, whose weaponry usually consisted of only sword and spear (Banerjee 1983, 160). The records of the British resident, as reported by Batra, indicate that there were tensions and difficulties between them. For instance, during a dispute in 1838 CE over the British retention of the unpopular Rawal Sheo Singh as Minister of Jaipur there was a mutiny by Nagas and other troops of the Jaipur army.

> Two battalions of Jaipur troops stationed at Ramgarh revolted and were joined by another force of 2,000 Nagas belonging to the Jaipur army. Ostensibly they mutinied for the recovery of the arrears of their salaries, but it was strongly contended that they had been incited to rebellion by Mahji" (Chandrawatt, an ally of the Rani Mother).... (Batra 1958, 143)

Citing the texts of the ultimatum sent to the leaders of Nagas and a later account of December 1838, both contained in the records of the foreign and Political Section of the Indian National

Archives, Batra (1958, 145) recounts the *denouement*:

> Colonel Alves, on reaching Ramgarh, issued an ultimatum to the rebels on 23rd November, 1838, requiring them to abide by the instructions of the minister and his brother and to surrender all their stores and arms. In return the Nagas were guaranteed the employment of their services and Ibrahim Khan and Kutub Khan, the Commanders of the Battalions, were promised the payment of arrears to their forces and the retention of such of them in service as were deemed fit. The rebels, after some hesitation and negotiation with Alves, yielded.

It may be that their loyalty to Jaipur and thus to the British during the Mutiny of 1857 helped preserve their position in the army of Jaipur. When the Mutiny began, Captain Eden was ordered to lead elements of the Jaipur army to maintain security in the districts of Mathura and Gurgaon. Maharaja Ram Singh II was eager to comply and provided him with 5000 troops, many of them Dadupanthi Nagas. Mangaldas mentions this event in a couplet from *Sundaroday* quoted by Mishra, indicating that its composition took place some time after the events of 1857.

> 16.97
> In the year (VS) 1914 (1857 CE), the foreign sepoys retreated.
> The fearful king united for assistance with the king of Jaipur.
> (quoted in Mishra 1997, 185)

Meanwhile, since most of Jaipur's army had been sent away to protect other districts, only 700 sepoys and 1800 Nagas remained to protect Jaipur itself, so 200-300 Nagas were stationed at every gate of the city (Gahalot 1966, 157). The larger contingent of Jaipur troops remained in the vicinity of Gurgaon and Mathura for almost three months; they were credited by the British with greatly aiding their cause through their dedication and loyalty (Batra 1958, 181). The *Marwar Census Report of 1891* (1997, 291) notes that, for their contribution, one of the Naga *mahants* was awarded the honorary title of *Jang Bahadur*

("Hero of the War") by the British government. And in the article on "Naraina" in the 1908 *Imperial Gazetteer of India* it is claimed that "the (Dadupanthi) Nagas were the only body of men really true to the Darbar, and it has been stated that, but for them, the so-called regular army of Jaipur would have rebelled" (1908, 370).

With such commendations for their deportment during the mutiny, the Dadupanthi Nagas continued their employment.[225] When there were no battles to fight nor taxes to collect, they busied themselves with such martial pursuits as practice in arms and wrestling, producing many famous wrestlers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Even in 1901, the Jaipur army contained 5,000 Nagas, classified as irregular infantry, in addition to "5,000 infantry divided into eight regiments.....700 cavalry, 860 artillerymen, and 100 camel sowars" (1908, 397). Something of the equivocal British attitude may be discerned from the article on Nagas authored by G. A. Grierson in James Hastings' *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (1917) in which both Sikh Nagas and Dadupanthi Nagas are distinguished from the other Naga communities who "wear the minimum of clothing that the laws of decency allow"

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[225] They may have been aided by the positive impression made upon some of the leading British officials by other Dadupanthis. Mahant Kailashdas, who is in the lineage of the *uttaradhi* Govinddas of Rajgarh and Jaipur, related the following story to me in explaining the origins of a magnificent 19th-century English folding bed in his possession. It is a capacious double bed of iron with brass decorations at head and foot with an intricate mechanical system for tightening the springs. The British political agent at the time had given it to an earlier mahant, Biharidas, who had ascended the *gaddi* in 1889 CE.

It seems that Biharidas, much like Kailashdas today, had a reputation as a healer so that one day the political agent visited him with his wife who was suffering from an ulcer. Biharidas was able to cure her "through his yogic power," and so the two men became friendly and the political agent would come to visit from time to time. One day, in the middle of the hot Rajasthani summer, the agent confided to him that he and his wife were about to visit Mt. Abu, a hill station in southern Rajasthan, to cool off. Mahant Biharidas replied that there was no reason to do so since it would rain in Jaipur that very day. "How is that possible? There is not a cloud in the sky!" responded the agent, but Biharidas insisted that nonetheless it would soon begin to rain.

A short while later, after the agent had returned to his residence in the Civil Lines just outside the walls of Jaipur, it began to rain so heavily and so steadily that he feared his house would be flooded. He soon sent a messenger to Mahant Biharidas asking him to stop the rain, which occurred shortly thereafter. It was after this incident that the political agent presented Biharidas with the gift of the bed.

and "are the offscourings of Vaishnava and Shaiva mendicant communities, of which they are worthless and profligate members." He later refers to the 5000 Nagas attached to the Jaipur army as "the only organized body" of Nagas left in India. Grierson goes on to quote the *Rajputana Gazetteer* of 1879 regarding the Nagas, an account that both praises them for their loyalty in 1857 and not so subtly criticizes them for their recalcitrance.

> They are reputed to be faithful and daring, and, as such, are more feared than the other troops of the State. They will not undergo any discipline, wear no uniform, and are armed with sword, spear, matchlock, and shield. During the general mutiny of 1857, these were the body of men really true to the chief, and, but for them, the so-called regular army would have rebelled.

The Dadupanthi Nagas of today believe that the British considered them inefficient and burdensome, and periodically tried to have them removed from the rolls of the Jaipur army. One study conducted prior to Indian Independence says that reorganization and reform of the Jaipur police and army, which was "continuously insisted upon by the British," had really begun during the minority of Maharaja Ram Singh II and was "almost completed" during the minority of Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II (1922-1970 CE) (Mehta n.d., 80-81). Niwai Mahant Ram Prasad relates one incident, which may have taken place in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, that is indicative of the touchy relations between the British administration and the Nagas. A British official, wanting to confirm whether the actual number of Dadupanthi Nagas corresponded to the number on the payroll, had them all lined up in a field and began to point as he counted them one by one. The *mahant*, standing nearby, unsheathed his sword and firmly informed the officer that, if he should continue to count, his hand would be cut off. The British official withdrew his hand and made no further attempts to enumerate the Dadupanthis.

It was only in 1938 that the Dadupanthi Nagas, long considered an anachronism and even a nuisance by the British, were officially disbanded. The British had exercised considerable control over the affairs of state during the minority years (1922-1931) of Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II (1922-1970), and it was finally in 1936 that the process of dissolution of the Naga irregulars was begun in the name of modernization. The police and army had been partially reorganized between 1923 and 1925 during the minority of the Maharaja, with further reorganization occurring a decade later in order to rid them of the "indisciplined (sic), rabble army of old regime" (Mehta n.d., 82-83). In 1936 recruitment of new Nagas was finally halted. Their actual strength at that time was found to be 3190 men on whom the state was spending 250,000 rupees per year, an average of almost 80 rupees per man. Of these, 1047 were retired in 1937. Of those remaining, a little over a hundred were trained for the regular army, about 500 were given land to cultivate, and others were given low-paying jobs in the police or as palace guards (Sarkar 1984, 384). Even though many were kept on as palace guards and in other government positions until the period of Indian independence and the incorporation of Jaipur into the State of Rajasthan in 1949, the majority eventually found themselves without a paying vocation.

Nagas in the twentieth century

Over the years after 1938, many Naga sadhus abandoned their vows in order to marry and raise families, most taking up agriculture or small businesses. Mishra (1997, 138) citing William Crooke's *Tribes and Castes of the North-western Province and Oudh* (1896), says that even in the nineteenth century the Nagas had lived in villages near Jaipur farming, raising camels and trading when not actively working for the state, so they mostly returned to these familiar activities. Of the few remaining celibate Nagas today, some are Ayurvedic

physicians, some are educators, some are successful businessmen ...other fields that some Nagas seem to have taken up even in the nineteenth century. Some, such as Swami Hanumandas, a married textile merchant and retired government worker in Sanganer, and Swami Ram Prakash, an ayurvedic doctor in Jaipur's Johari Bazaar, have become well-known and influential members of the Jaipur business community. Others, such as Swami Ramsukhdas in Jaipur and Mahant Jairamdas in Ghatra (both married), have served for years on local *panchayats* and are active in local politics. Dr. Dayaram Swami, the chief disciple of the prestigious Niwai Mahant Ram Prasad, whom all believe will inherit his position, was adopted as a youth by the latter and raised as his disciple and successor. He is today a medical doctor at Jaipur's Sawai Man Singh Hospital who is married and has two children, a sign that the Dadupanthi Nagas may be close to disappearing completely as an ascetic order. In the 1980s Monika Horstmann (Thiel-Horstmann 1986) had observed that married sadhus were ostracized at the annual mela and considered somehow polluted, but my observations fifteen years later indicate that the situation has become so common that it largely goes unnoticed.

Today, many of the lay adherents of the Dadu Panth from localities south and east of the city of Jaipur such as Tonk, Chatsu and Dausa claim to be the descendants of those Nagas who were disbanded in the 1930s. Most of them bear the surnames of "Swami" or "Dadupanthi." Intermarriage is common among this group, and they are in the process of forming a new caste grouping.[226] The younger men and boys, particularly from the area around Chatsu, Niwai and Tonk, have formed an organization known as the "Jaipur Sri Dadupanthi Naga Force." During melas and processions they entertain the crowds by

[226] For an exemplary account of intermarriage and caste formation among communities of householders descended from former ascetics, see Veronique Bouillier's (1979) *Naitre Renonçant: Une Caste de Sannyasi Villageois au Nepal*.

performing mock sword fights and various other displays of swordsmanship and acrobatic skill while wearing the distinctive short pants and short red jackets worn by their forefathers on such occasions. Some have mock fights with actual swords (very gingerly) or (more fiercely) with wooden sticks. Others explode firecrackers with large flat swords with which they slap at the firecrackers that have been placed on the ground. During the three-day foot procession (*pad yatra*) from Amer to Bhairana in September 1997, they hired an elephant and several of them rode him at the head of the procession as it passed through the main markets of Jaipur, displaying how the Nagas themselves traditionally were given the honor of leading such processions, much as Haridas had been described as riding an elephant as he traveled in the early seventeenth century.

There is a good deal of tension and mistrust these days between householder Dadupanthis, many descended from Nagas and represented by the Dadu Dayalu Mahasabha, and the remaining sadhus, particularly the *khalsa* sadhus of Naraina. The organization was originally founded in 1920 CE during the annual mela at Naraina by the widely known ayurvedic physician, Swami Lacchiram[227] who the same year established the still operational Dadu Mahavidyalay, a Sanskrit college in Jaipur.[228] Initially, the association had met resistance in its attempts to contribute to sectarian development. Thus, it was not until 1946

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[227] Swami Lacchiram was a renowned ayurvedic doctor who also founded the highly respected Ayurvedic College in Jaipur. I spoke about him with N. K. Pareek, an amateur historian who, until his death in 2000, wrote a column on Jaipur history for the local newspaper, *Rajasthan Patrika*, under the pseudonym Nagarik (citizen). He told me that Maharaja Ganga Singh of Bikaner (1887-1943 CE) wouldn't allow himself to be treated by anyone but Swami Lacchiram. He further opined, as had Swami Hanumandas earlier, that one of the great social contributions of the Dadu Panth was the development and popularization of ayurvedic medicine. Many Nagas did practice it in the nineteenth century, but it was especially the Dadupanthi *virakt* sadhus who were considered expert in the field.

[228] Although open to anyone, many of the male students at Dadu Mahavidyalay are descendants of Nagas from outside of Jaipur. About twenty of them live at any given time in the *haveli* of the Niwai Mahant, where Mahant Ram Prasad provides for their expenses and acts as a surrogate father to them.

CE that it was reorganized and was officially established with government sanction.[229] Gradually, the organization acquired properties that had belonged to various lineages of the panth so that today it exercises control over a number of important properties, including: the Dadudwara (rebuilt in 1950 through their efforts) and the former residence of Garibdas at Naraina, the Dadudwaras in Amer and Bhairana, the Shri Mahanand Ashram in Rishikesh, and monasteries in Kankhal (near Hardwar) and Varanasi.

The tensions between the two factions are generally not overt, the attitudes being conveyed in whispered asides and disapproving looks. Sometimes the householders accuse the sadhus of living too comfortable a life, and of only being interested in money. Sometimes sadhus not so subtly accuse the leadership of the Mahasabha of using their positions to grab power, or to confiscate property rightfully belonging to the ascetics. One leading *khalsa* sadhu went to great lengths to explain to me that the Jaitram *barahdari* (where the *mahant* and his disciples presently reside and hold court) is the oldest building on the property, and to deny that the Garibdas *haveli* owned by the Mahasabha predates it or that the latter (or indeed anything on the property) was built at the behest of Emperor Jahangir, as a popular legend related by lay devotees has it. "At the time of Garibdas," he exclaimed, "the *mahant* didn't even own the land, so how could they have built permanent structures on it?" He went on to explain that, while there is a continuous line of *mahants* dating from the time of Dadu or shortly thereafter, until the time of Jaitram it was only loosely organized, with little if any infrastructure. He argued that the Dadudwara had only been built about "two hundred years ago" by a group of sadhus who wanted a place to worship *Dadu Vani*, and said that the *khalsa* sadhus of Naraina have always considered it a point of "degeneration" when

[229] The information for this account comes from a pamphlet published in 1965 by the Dadu Dayalu Mahasabha entitled "A Description of the Works of the Eighteenth Year of Sri Dadu Dayalu Mahasabha" ("*Sri Dadudayalu Mahasabha ke Atharahvem Varsh ka Karya-Vivaran*").

Dadupanthis stopped reading the words of Dadu and began to worship them.[230]

Whereas certain festivals have traditionally taken place at Naraina and have involved both lay and renunciant devotees, in recent years lay followers have begun to assert their independence by organizing their own gatherings and other events such as the annual three-day *pad yatra* from Amer to Bhairana. On the occasion of Dadu's death anniversary in May 1998, a third annual gathering was held at Dadu Mahavidyalay in the wealthy suburbs of Jaipur. I was surprised to notice that no sadhus were among the two hundred or so attendees. Even Swami Bajrangdas, the principal of the school who is a sadhu in the lineage of Nagas, noticeably absented himself. The main speaker was Ramsukhdas Swami, a householder who was raised as a Naga and is considered something of a scholar and a spokesman for lay Dadupanthis. His is perhaps a typical story.

Ramsukhdas relates that he was adopted by a Naga sadhu at the age of six months and was raised by him in a village not far from Jaipur. At one time there were Naga sadhus in the ashram there, but eventually through attrition he was the only one remaining. So, at age 29, not knowing what else to do, he got married. He makes a living farming the land that belonged to the *akhara,* which he inherited and will pass on to his progeny.[231] Although he lives on the outskirts of Jaipur, he has served for decades on the *panchayat* of the village where his farm land in located. He personally feels that the Nagas were mostly interested in fighting and that, during their heyday, they contributed to the "degeneration" of Dadu's message. Like Swami Gopaldas, he has come to feel that *Dadu Vani* should be read and studied, not wrapped and

[230] Personal communication, Swami Gopaldas, July 8, 1998.

[231] The story of Mahant Jairamdas of Ghatra is remarkably similar. A Rajput by birth, he was adopted as an infant by the Ghatra mahant and raised as his successor. He became the mahant at the latter's death but eventually, with no new disciples of his own and no other remaining sadhus in the *math*, he married. He says he still reads *Dadu Vani* in the morning and performs *arati* in the *Prahlad shala* in the evening. However, besides serving in the local government, he operates a grain mill in the nearby town of Tehla. He occupies the property with his wife, mother, and three children to whom ownership will pass at the time of his death.

placed on an altar as an object of worship. Both Ramsukhdas and Hanumandas have estimated that no more than thirty of the original fifty-two *thambhas* survive, many of those with only one or two sadhus.

Even at Naraina, there are only a handful of young, potential *khalsa* sadhus, and several of them admitted to me that they hoped to get married some day. Thus, it is not just the Naga sadhus whose numbers are diminishing, but sadhus of all divisions. By contrast, the relative numbers of lay devotees are increasing, though they remain small. Nonetheless, they are beginning to assert their power and independence. Many of the lay followers today are not necessarily solely adherents of Dadu and the Dadu Panth. Considering themselves, broadly speaking, Vaishnava, they find no contradiction in visiting Vaishnava temples and worshiping the deities there. In this way, there is a gradual movement toward incorporation of Dadupanthi laymen, many descended from the Nagas, into caste Hinduism and the Vaishnava faith.

Chapter Six

The Nagas and Changes in Dadupanthi Religious Practice

After the death of Dadu, his followers had tried to follow his example and teachings while leading the lives of householders in some cases and ascetics in others. The ascetics always seemed to have more influence than the householders, so that for much of the history of the community of followers of Dadu the term "Dadupanthi" referred specifically, even exclusively, to renunciants. For many, the focus was on Garib Das and Dadu's last center of activity, Naraina. Clearly, too, places associated with Dadu's life such as Bhairana and Sambhar held some importance. Initially, there were numerous different groups of devotees: those gathered around the Naraina *mahants*; the disciples who had moved north and become known as *uttaradhis*; individual disciples such as Sundardas the Younger in the town of Fatehpur (Shekhawati) and Rajjab in Sanganer; and the lineage of disciples gathered around Prahladdas and Haridas in the hills east of Amer, and around Shyamdas in Amer itself. As certain traditions developed, traditions such as gatherings in the name of Dadu and visits to sites viewed as sacred, these groups gradually coalesced into a community more clearly recognizable as a sect or panth. Yet, to a large degree, each group maintained a great deal of autonomy.

Only with the advent of Jaitram as Mahant in 1693 CE was there a concerted attempt to develop a set of guidelines to which all Dadupanthi ascetics should be made to adhere. Later during his tenure, several significant changes in the ideology and practice took place in

response to the demands of Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II. In particular, the exclusion of Muslims, members of the lower castes, and in some regions women from the ascetic orders signified a marked break with the ideals preached by Dadu. In the middle decades of the eighteenth century other new ideas and practices appeared, some of which can be directly attributed to the Nagas who gradually became more and more prominent as they first defied Jaitram's call for conformity to standards of appearance and later tried to establish control over Naraina and its *mahants*.

For over 150 years (circa 1755-1938 CE) the Nagas had represented the numerical majority of Dadupanthi sadhus[232] and, due to their numbers and wealth, had held a position of significant power within the panth. From that position, they were able to gradually introduce into sectarian orthodoxy innovations in both ideology and devotional practice. Many of the significant changes that occurred after about 1750 CE can be attributed to their influence. It is clear from the descriptions provided by Raghodas that, by the mid-seventeenth century, certain practices had already become institutionalized to some degree. Yet many of those practices existing in the panth today, particularly those which are at odds with the essential teachings of Dadu, were introduced only in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. In fact, many indicate adherence to typically Rajput practices and reflect the distinctive Rajput ethos which infused the subculture of the Dadupanthi Nagas, and which they in turn infused into other divisions of the Dadu Panth.

Devotional practices of the seventeenth century

As has been noted, the creation, collection, copying, and recitation of religious poetry

[232] According the Swami Ramsukhdas and others, from at least the early nineteenth century until today Nagas constitute about eighty-five percent of Dadupanthi sadhus. (Personal communication May 22, 1998).

was a significant aspect of the practices of the followers of Dadu, including those who would become Nagas, even from the period prior to Dadu's death in 1604 CE. Additionally, devotees meditated intently upon that poetry, particularly the words of Dadu collected in *Dadu Vani*, for they are described as "remembering the words and examining them with every breath." The compositions of Dadu and others, such as those in the various collections known as *Sarvangi* and *Panch Vani*, were set to music and sung or chanted in group settings. Raghodas wrote that "the society remains together," generating feelings of love, brotherhood and contentment. This and other of his statements indicate that the Dadupanthi sadhus of the mid-seventeenth century lived together in monastic groups, sharing "sacred tales" and "religious songs," practicing meditation, certain types of yoga, and recitation of the name(s) of the divine.

The sadhus in the lineage of Sundardas, the brother disciples of Raghodas to whom he is primarily referring, were highly literate. Not only were they actively engaged in literary pursuits, but many were familiar with the classical Hindu texts. Raghodas observed that in addition to singing *bhajans*, practicing detachment, and other religious practices, a sadhu should be familiar with the various yogas as well as the Vedas and *shastras*.[233]

All of these practices reflect the period of internal peace and prosperity enjoyed by the princely state of Amber, a period that continued uninterrupted for over a century from the first contact with Emperor Akbar in 1562 CE until at least the death of Mirza Raja Jai Singh I in 1667 CE. The peace and prosperity were a direct result of the nature of the political relations of Amber with the Mughal state, in which the elite Rajput leadership of

[233] Although Dadupanthi sadhus today practice no particular form of yoga, and indeed there are few direct references to its practice in Dadupanthi texts, it may at one time have been more common. One eighteenth century painting in the collection of Ramkripalu Sharma of Jaipur produced in Bundelkhand illustrates 34 different yoga postures. It was produced by an artist whose signature reads "Jaitram, *shishya* of Dadu."

Amber was allowed to govern internally while accumulating vast fortunes through military service in more troubled regions of the empire.

Many of Dadu's immediate disciples seem to have scattered widely after his death, but in general the disciples of Prahlad and Haridas remained more fixed, establishing residential communities of sadhus who traveled less frequently, for Raghodas' narrative reveals that emphasis was placed upon communal activities that developed devotional feelings as well as a dedication to the group. Those who desire to pursue spiritual lives, he says, profit by living within "the monastery of Ram" where they engaged in recitation of the Name, chanting and singing devotional songs, meditation upon the words of Dadu, and other practices of a contemplative and even scholarly nature.

Already, by the time of the composition of the *Bhaktamal*, sites associated with the life of Dadu had become revered places of pilgrimage and gathering. Raghodas refers to the "five sacred *dhams*" of Dadu, which correspond with the five pilgrimage sites mentioned even today by Dadupanthis: Naraina, Bhairana, Amber, Sambhar, and Kardala. They are, he claims, more salvific than even the *Bhagavad Gita*. There may have been other places associated with Dadu where devotees gathered on special occasions, for Raghodas particularly mentions that the group from Sambhar celebrated seven festivals in seven different locations in and around Sambhar.

> 509.
> In Dadu's panth is contentment, cleverness, reflection
> upon the feet of Hari.
> Sacred tales, religious songs, affection, for the purpose of singing
> of the glory of Hari.
> The society remains together, creating the feeling of love
> for Parabrahma.
> Creating books of many kinds, (like) a bird named allegory.
> Stories of the attributes of the adepts are told which

bring great benefit.
Wisdom, yoga, renunciation, and absorption separate mind and body.
In Dadu's panth is contentment, cleverness, reflection
upon the feet of Hari.

510.
Dadu Dayal is a guardian of the light; wisdom arises
at the time of perfect repose.
As the eight watches (of the day) in an unbroken line are just one
(day), so in the heart we recite the name of the guru.
The *Vani* takes the great wealth of Brahma (and puts it)
in a treasury; all see that this world is a false dream.
By remembering the words and examining them with every breath,
says Ragho, one gains the wealth of that skilled meditation.

512.
Mohan Daftari glows in splendor (as if) a lamp is behind him.
Chatradas is famous for his expert accomplishments.
He that desires Ramji profits (by being) within the monastery
of Ram.
So that, progressing through the degrees of knowledge
and sub-knowledge, he attains the treasure.
Knowledge of *samkhya* yoga, karma yoga, *bhajans*, bhakti yoga,
Knowing the Vedas and *shastras*, this is the complete method.
Ragho says, night and day, Ram is not forgotten for an instant.
A body conquered and a mind unattached is a great treasure.
....

536.
O brothers, honor remains to Parameshvar's cattle
(due to) Dadudayal's supervision.
The *qazi* gave silk(en cloth) and teased him to his face;
Swami (Dadu) was not saddened, but got retribution.[234]
The group from Sambhar has seven festivals,
all seven places give satisfaction.
....

553.
Hearing the *sakhis* of pure men, the passion of Maya decreases.

[234] This apparently refers to the incident in *Dadu Janam lila* (3.1-3.5) in which a *qazi* who threatens Dadu changes his mind after (miraculously) his house, containing 700 bundles of cotton, burns down.

Stories, *kirtan, bhajans*, vows kept in the heart with affection,
68 *tirthas* of eminence in the world, a thousand cows
given in alms *(dana)*.
Better than these is the self-respect which is a fruit
of the power of truth.
(In the) *Bhagavad Gita* are 33,000 sacred names.
Its four *stotras* are subordinate to the five sacred *dhams* (of Dadu).

554.
You may recite the Gayatri Guru mantra, bathe in the 68 *tirthas*,
Read the book of *Bhaktamal*[235] and obtain so many fruits of that.
Perform devotion to the child deity (Krishna),
perform (other) devotions.
Hear and do, hear all the uproar (and din) of religion.
Ragho says, Ramji benefits both the listener and speaker.
Worship of Krishna as a child (*bhaktavatsal*) is growing
in the royal courts; the religion of the Vedas
is spreading among the four varnas.
The man Ragho is absorbed night and day in the *Bhaktamal*,
which destroys the impurity of the Kali Yuga.

Mangaldas, writing some two hundred years later, uses the metaphor of Dadu having created a "ship of bhakti," that is, the community of believers who came to form the Dadu Panth. He describes the process whereby, having absorbed from Dadu the message of *nirgun* bhakti, the variegated group of initial disciples spread out to communicate the message. Fifty-two are said to have established *thambhas*, fixed places of residence where eventually monastic lineages developed. Another one hundred, distinguished from the fifty-two "disciples" by the terms "devotees" and "servants," were householders who may have wandered here and there or even remained in their native villages, but established no lineages. Until recent years, however, many householders maintained a symbiotic relationship with the ascetics, symbolically providing them alms in the form of food on a daily basis and offering sons to them for adoption into the panth.[236]

[235] Raghodas here must be referring to the *Bhaktamal* of Nabhadas.
[236] See Thiel-Horstmann 1986 for an account of how these practices have disappeared.

Mangaldas also mentions that the Naga sadhus of his day and earlier practiced meditation and shared stories and songs as had their predecessors. He mentions "*sants* gathering at the mela," clearly the annual mela at Naraina commemorating the birth of Dadu that had become a firmly established tradition even in the early seventeenth century. Significantly, he refers several times to "worship of the book," meaning *Dadu Vani*. At the time of Raghodas it had no doubt been treated with honor and respect, but it had been read and studied for its wisdom and its ability to inspire devotion in those who read and understood it. By the time of Mangaldas, however, it had obtained iconic status.

4. 27.
He assumed a body for the task of (spreading) *nirgun* bhakti,
so that what followed was love and renunciation.
Having given that lovely, powerful gift,
the Lord abandoned his body.

4. 31.
Worship of the book by the people, *sants* gathering at the mela.
When the lordly guru of love departed,
all repeated the mantra of Hari.

4. 32.
(It) was spread to the world by these adepts,
by disciples in many guises.[237]
Mangal says, when Dadu met the Formless,
he created the ship of bhakti.

4. 33.
52 *thambhas* were established by disciples,
100 became devotees and servants.
They met a guru in their own likeness, says Mangal,
one who spoke eloquently.

[237] Mangaldas here uses the word *bhesh*, often translated as dress, or appearance, indicating that there was from the beginning no uniformity of dress or other outer aspects of the appearance of Dadupanthi sadhus.

The elevation of *Dadu Vani*

At some point, *Dadu Vani* had been installed as an icon, an object to be worshipped by adherents of the *nirgun* path who still eschewed the worship of images of gods and goddesses. The practice remains much the same today. Although there are published editions of *Dadu Vani* that are still read, recited and studied by Dadupanthi sadhus and laymen alike, every temple (Dadudwara) of the Dadupanthis contains within the inner shrine a copy of *Dadu Vani* to which homage and worship are offered. Often this is an older, handwritten manuscript version of the text. Morning and evening, as well as on special occasions, the ritual practice of *arati* is offered before the book, a practice apparently already well established at the time of Mangaldas.

> 9.34.
> This very *nirgun* bhakti is the words of the heart sung by the guru.
> The whole panth contemplates the word and worships it in the heart.
> Daily worship and *arati* of *(Dadu) Vani*, circumambulation,
> and bowing.
> Mangal says, we always meditate calmly and adore only Ram
> in the heart.[238]
>
> 9.35.
> The Book of the *Vani* is revered and worshipped with spiritual
> service in the heart.
> Mangal says that night and day they repeat the *nirgun* name
> of the undifferentiated Alakh.

When and how did this and other religious practices, resembling as they do contemporary practices among Sikhs and Hindus, begin? And when did they begin to construct the temples, or Dadudwaras, to house the shrine and the book? There were apparently gathering halls, especially for group singing, quite early, and in those early days

[238] This may have been intended as a pun, as it could also be translated, "Mangal says, Keval and Hridai were always meditating calmly and adoring Ram."

the term Dadudwara may well have applied to such gathering halls. It was much later, sometime in the eighteenth century, that the book of *Dadu Vani* became enshrined therein and the structure began to be treated as a temple. According to Mangaldas, the creators of the Naga *jama'ats*, Kevalram and Hridairam, were responsible for these innovation as well.[239]

There is an illustration in the *chhatri* of the Dadupanthi sadhu Dhanram at the village of Jasrapur in Shekhawati that confirms that *Dadu Vani* had already been enshrined by the 1770s, but beyond that the development cannot be accurately dated. Certainly the manner of its treatment is similar to Sikh practices regarding the *Guru Granth Sahib* that developed after its elevation to the status of Guru in the early eighteenth century, and is likely to have developed in emulation of them. There are, however, differences in the perception and treatment of the respective holy books. W. H. McLeod explains that the Sikh reverence for the *Guru Granth Sahib* is not "bibliolatry" since "the Sikh quite rightly rejects the suggestion that his belief necessarily involves *worship*" of the book (McLeod 1975, 64). For the Sikh, the book has a personality, it is awakened in the morning and put to bed at night. Although Dadupanthis enshrine the book of *Dadu Vani*, perform *arati* to it, and appear to worship it, they do not treat it in the same manner as a living being. For many it is still, in a way, just a book, even if a divinely inspired book. Unlike the Sikhs, they have no compunction about it being translated or written in other scripts. I did note that, when entering Dadudwaras, and even more commonly when performing *arati* or *puja* to *Dadu Vani*, many lay Dadupanthi men, like all Sikh men, would cover their heads. Usually they would just use a handkerchief or piece of cloth rather than a turban or cap as Sikhs or Muslims would wear. It clearly is not a requirement, for a good percentage of men don't cover their heads, but for many it clearly is something they feel it is necessary to do. This is another example not only of the influence of

[239] It may be, on the other hand, that this claim is simply hyperbole to enhance the Nagas' prestige, but there is likely to have been some degree of truth to the claim.

the Sikh example, but also illustrates the relative lack of uniform modes of worship within the Dadu Panth.

Nagas did fight along with mercenary Sikhs in the army of Jawahar Singh of Bharatpur (Pande 1970, 90), and may have had further contact with them in other mercenary armies as well while both were traveling about the regions of Rajasthan, Haryana and Punjab. But there are other sources of Sikh influence as well. The *uttaradhis* had been founded by Dadu's disciple Baba Banvari Hardas, who had left and settled north of Rajasthan. They came to form a monastic business community spread throughout present-day Haryana and Punjab where they came into intimate contact with the Sikhs. These, the *uttaradhis*, were the same group of sadhus who had negotiated with the Nagas for the return of Mahant Chainram to Naraina in 1755. Significantly, one of their number, the wealthy physician Thanderam, donated the funds for the construction of a new and significantly larger Dadudwara at Naraina in 1827 CE. There had apparently been some sort of temple there for a prolonged period, but Mahant Dileram felt the need for a larger one to accommodate increased numbers of devotees. The Jodhpur Maharaja donated as much Makrana marble as Dadupanthis could carry away in three days and Thanderam donated 31,505 rupees (DPP I: 154-156). The present temple itself, rebuilt in 1950 and said to be modeled after the previous one, does indeed resemble a Sikh Gurudwara.[240]

Sacred sites and pilgrimage

In addition to establishing temples and worship of the book, Keval and Hridai are credited with "acknowledging" the *mela* at Naraina, referring to their agreement to return to

[240] Like a Sikh Gurudwara, the Dadudwaras I visited at Naraina, Bhairana, Sambhar and elsewhere were in essence large, minimally decorated halls in which devotees could gather, seated on the floor, for devotional singing. Only at one end of the hall would there be a relatively small recess or room, comparable to the *garbha griha* of a Hindu temple, in which a copy of *Dadu Vani* wrapped in cloth would be placed. At Naraina, the room holding *Dadu Vani* has solid silver doors.

participation in the Naraina event after several years of holding their own competing *mela* at Bhairana following the schism over their refusal to remove their Rajput-style hair and mustaches at the behest of Mahant Jaitram. When a compromise was finally reached, they must have given their sanction to the Naraina mela, allowing Nagas to again participate. It is an indication that their influence within the broader panth beyond their own Naga lineage was so substantial that practices already established within the panth may have been further legitimized by their "acknowledgement."

In addition to the annual mela at Naraina in the month of *phalgun*, they appear to have further lent their approval to the practice of pilgrimage to the four or five places intimately associated with the life of Dadu where Dadudwaras had been constructed for the purpose of the worship of *Dadu Vani*. Mangaldas specifies pilgrimage only to the four *dhams* of Sambhar, Amber, Naraina and Bhairana. It is thus unclear, when he speaks of *arati* at "five sanctified places," whether the fifth place is Ghatra, the primordial *dham* of the Naga lineage, the present-day fifth sacred site of Kardala where Dadu had spent time in meditation in his very early years, or some other site.

8.23.
Day and night Hari guru is remembered through stories,
songs and meditation.
Keval and Hridairam were men who had remarkable wisdom
in their hearts.

8.24.
They kept Parabrahma and the guru in their hearts,
and gave homage to four *gurudwaras*.
They created the *jama'ats*, acknowledged the mela,
and were creators of the (Dadu)dwaras.

8.25.
Sambhar and Amer are eminent, (also) Naraina and Bhairana.
Mangal says, there are four new places of pilgrimage,

why take your "offerings" (*pinda pran*) (elsewhere)?

8.26.
There are 68 *tirthas* worth journeying to, says Mangal,
when you have the intention to go.
(But if) you haven't reached Bhairana,
you've wasted your enthusiasm needlessly.

8.27.
At five sanctified places there is *arati*, and there is concentration
on the guru at Ghatra.
Mangal says, Keval and Hridai were people of Ram,
who were fully awakened.

8.28.
....
Keval and Hridai were men of Ram, (who) eliminated
the sufferings of the world.

8.29.
Keval had the power of mental arts, Hridai was another Hari.
They created the *jama'at*, the ship of the world,
which bore incredible bhakti.[241]

For several reasons, Ghatra seems unlikely to be the fifth sanctified place to which Mangaldas refers. First of all, even today it is not a place commonly visited or recommended for visit by anyone but sadhus in the Naga lineage. Furthermore, in Ghatra there is no Dadudwara *per se*, but rather a relatively plain stucco building variously referred to as "Prahlad *shala*" (the refuge of Prahlad) or "Sundar Dwara" (the gateway to Sundar). Thus, in the passage above in verse 8.27, Mangaldas seems to be contrasting the focus on the guru (whether Prahlad or Sundardas or both) at Ghatra with the *arati* to *Dadu Vani* at the other five sites. In one verse of the *Bansadipika*, he mentions gatherings of Nagas at Ghatra, gatherings that traditionally occurred annually on *vasant panchami*. These annual meetings

[241] Note that earlier Mangaldas wrote of Dadu having created the "ship of bhakti" which was the panth; now Keval and Hridai are depicted as having created the "ship of bhakti" which are the *jama'ats*.

still continue, although I was told by Mahant Jairamdas of Ghatra that for many years it has been poorly attended. On the occasion in 1998, which fell on the first of February, a mere handful of Naga sadhus attended. By contrast, a gathering sponsored by the Dadu Dayalu Mahasabha at the Dadudwara in Amer on that date attracted several hundred lay devotees in addition to perhaps a half dozen sadhus from different lineages.

> 14.6.
> Keval and Chatur came from the lineage of Shyam and Raghav(das).
> Uddhav's followers felt longing and spread bhakti.
> All take refuge at the feet of Haridas of Hindaun.
> They all meet at Sundar's "throne" at Ghatra and glory
> in the dust of his feet.

There is another indication that Mangaldas may not have meant to include Ghatra among the five sanctified sites of Dadupanthi pilgrimage. Although Raghodas had mentioned the importance of Ghatra as the place established by Sundardas and Prahlad, and had mentioned the construction of buildings of some sort, a verse quoted by Mishra from the thirteenth *skanda* of *Sundaroday* suggests that the initial form of the present Prahlad Shala at Ghatra was not constructed until quite late, in *Samvat* 1882 (1825 CE), when Nagas stopped there en route from Udaipur back to Jaipur.

> When *mahants* and *sants* established a lattice frame
> it was *Samvat* '82.
> With great, brilliant power they performed recitation of Hari.
> By income from their work, the Shyam Sena built a halting-place.
> They asked for a *gurudwara* and the *sants* told them
> (to build) a lattice frame.
> *Mahants* and *sants*, the whole *jama'at* had obtained it in *bhent*.
> They obtained permission and laid the foundation for a *bhajan* hall.
> Later, they created hundreds of (such) places for all the *thambhas*,
> Four-walled halls for the transmission of service to Hari.
> (quoted in Mishra 1997, 183).

From this it appears that no permanent structure for devotional gatherings had been

erected at Ghatra prior to 1825. If that were the case, then it is arguable that the majority of *gurudwaras*, or Dadudwaras, were only constructed in the nineteenth century. Like Sikh Gurudwaras, they functioned primarily as halls where devotees could gather for the singing of devotional *bhajans*. It is worth remarking that during the annual mela at Naraina during the month of *phalgun*, there are numerous all-night singing sessions (*jagaran*) which take place not in the Dadudwara, but rather in small rooms and homes.[242] This passage also conveys the idea that many of these structures were constructed by Nagas using their earnings from mercenary employment.

Other religious innovations: worship of Hanuman

Other religious practices referred to by Mangaldas include offering food to the poor, worship of the images of the feet (*charan chinhas*) of *sants* at their memorial cenotaphs, communal meals offered on festival and other occasions of ritual gatherings, and the repetition of the mantra of greeting, "Dadu Ram, Satya Ram." While some of these practices, such as communal dining on festive or memorial occasions, may have had their origins in the seventeenth or even the sixteenth century, many more developed within the armed Naga subculture that developed in the mid-eighteenth century. Many of these religious practices were part and parcel of the greater religious culture of north India at that time, particularly as it was manifested in eastern Rajasthan, and indicate that despite their initiation into ascetic life and some degree of indoctrination into Dadupanthi traditions, many Nagas continued to manifest aspects of their pre-renunciatory Rajput identities and their concomitant bundles of religious beliefs and concepts. Some of their practices, such as the construction of memorial *chhatris* and the installation therein of symbolic footprints of the deceased *sant*, were unique

[242] See Thiel-Horstmann 1985b for an account of these all-night *bhajan* sessions.

to the Rajput and Jain communities of Rajputana. Others, such as the worship of the Book of *Dadu Vani* and the worship of Hanuman, indicate the possibility of influence arising from Naga interactions with Sikhs and Ramanandis.

Indeed, among the most striking of developments introduced by the Nagas was the worship of Hanuman, the "monkey god" who was the companion and servant of Ram, the avatar of Vishnu. Although the story of Ram had been well-known on the subcontinent for over 1500 years, the cult of Ram as an object of intense popular devotion did not begin to flourish in north India until the sixteenth century, both giving rise to and subsequently building upon the widespread popularity of the *Ramayana* of Tulsidas, composed circa 1574 CE (Bakker 1981, 75-76). Widespread devotion to Hanuman was an even later development. Among ascetics, he may have initially been adopted as a tutelary deity by Shaiva *sannyasis* in Ayodhya, and only in the early or mid- eighteenth century by Ramanandi *vairagis*. The Vaishnava *akharas*, which had adopted their military organization and nomenclature from the Shaiva Nagas, similarly may have adopted as their tutelary deity the image of Hanuman which Shaiva sadhus had been worshiping "as if he were Bhairava" in their fortified headquarters in Ayodhya (Bakker 1986, 145). In like manner, the Dadupanthi Nagas who had adopted their military organization and nomenclature from the Ramanandis, may have adopted the cult of Hanuman from the Ramanandis while attenuating it in order to conform to their ostensibly *nirgun* ideology. I may be recalled that the Ramanandi Mahant Balanand was a devotee of Hanuman and carried a flag bearing Hanuman's image.

According to Naga traditions, sometime shortly after the death of so many of them at the Battle of Khatu in 1779, Hanuman appeared in a dream to one of the *mahants*, and asked him to worship him and bear his image into battle in order to ensure success. In the dream, the *mahant* pleaded that as "*nirgun panthis*," they were not allowed to do so, but ultimately he

agreed to at least carry a battle flag with the image of Hanuman. As the Dadupanthi Nagas subsequently began to meet with military successes, they continued to do so.

The Nagas of today adopt a very interesting attitude toward their predecessors' relationship with the deity Hanuman. His images are not particularly used anymore, although there is a large painted image of him on the back, outer wall of the Dadudwara in Amer and there are occasional smaller, inconspicuous images near the central shrine in some Dadupanthi monasteries. However, the Naga sadhus make a fine semantic distinction, arguing that he was never "worshipped" but rather only "honored" and "respected" for practical purposes, i.e., for his ability to bring victory in battle. In this instance, a continuing trend toward a puritan Vaishnavization of the Dadu Panth, with the possibility of eventually being reabsorbed into caste Hinduism as protestant Vaishnavas who abjure the use of forehead marks (*tilaks*), beads (*malas*) and icons, has led in the twentieth century to the de-emphasizing of the previous iconic role of Hanuman among the Nagas.[243]

In a passage quoted by Mishra from *Sundaroday*, Mangaldas seems to be describing the first occasion of their "honoring" of Hanuman and his acceptance of their devotion. Interestingly, though, Hanuman here seems to be involved in the formation of the *jama'at* itself, a formation related in an unspecified manner to "the assembly of the four *sampradays*." Here the human actor is Mahant Santoshdas, the Rajput "king" of Palri who inherited the *gaddi* after the death of Mahant Mangaldas at Khatu and held it at least until his death in 1825 CE.

> 16.57.
> Then the sadhus of Dayal, taking incense, offered it.

[243] Swami Narayandas (DPP III: 62-63) does describe the Naga celebration of the Hindu festival of Dussehra, apparently as he experienced it growing up in the Udaipur *jama'at* in the early twentieth century. He describes thousands of Nagas building a *havan* (sacred fire) before an image of Hanuman on the ninth night of Navratri, then carrying the image in a procession out of the town to a site where they ultimately light and burn an image of Ravana with flaming arrows.

With a cool gaze, Hanuman was pleased and accepted it.
Betel, firecrackers, flowers, dried fruits of five kinds and sweets,
Hanuman partook of them all and said:
"Form an army and go forth."
Santosh(das), the *mahant* of the *gaddi* of Shyam,
joined the assembly of the four *sampradays*.
Mangal says, Remembering Guru (Dadu) Dayal,
that night they marched off forthwith.
(quoted in Mishra 1997, 185)

In another verse, Hanuman is depicted as rejecting the devotional offerings of Vaishnava sadhus while accepting those of the Dadupanthis who then successfully ward off the enemy and protect the grateful Vaishnavas. It indicates that the Dadupanthis must have supplicated Hanuman in this manner prior to military engagements. Of course, it becomes as well another opportunity for Mangaldas to tout the superiority of Dadupanthis over Vaishnava sadhus, even in terms of worshiping their own iconic deity!

16.55.
With weapons fastened on, they surrounded the Lakheri
valley country.
In the four directions there was no exit. They watched the passes,
valleys and hills.
The brave warriors of the panth of the divine guru, Dadu.
There those sadhus offered fruits and nuts to their dear Hanuman.
Vaishnavas came and offered incense, but Hanuman did not accept.
Mangal says, Dayal's men came and offered incense,
after first repeating (his name) by hand.[244]
At the plea of the Vaishnavas, the men of Dayal appeared
and removed the dangers.
The (men of the) *sampraday*, because they had removed the danger
completely, touched the feet of the the party in adoration.

Although ritual use of the figure of Hanuman, or indeed of any other Hindu gods, never became commonplace within the Dadu Panth, the precedent set by the Nagas who initiated his worship in the late eighteenth century was emulated by other Dadupanthis in the

[244] That is, keeping track of the number of repetitions on the joints of the fingers.

ensuing decades. Most notable among these was Mahant Nirbhairam (1780-1814 CE) who, although the Mahant of Naraina, spent much of his later life in and around Rajgarh in the princely state of Alwar. In fact, he is the only Naraina *mahant* since Jaitram whose cenotaph is not in Naraina; it is located in the garden of Govind Niwas, the *haveli* of his contemporary Govinddas (d. 1834 CE), in Rajgarh.

Nirbhairam is supposed to have established twelve temples or shrines of Hanuman throughout Alwar. One is near the Naga center of Ghatra, but the most famous in the region is the Hanuman Mandir at Pandupol, located within Sariska National Park. Mahant Jairamdas of Ghatra explains that Nirbhairam had only established naturally existing "rocks" as icons representative of Hanuman, but later they were painted and otherwise altered to more closely resemble the Monkey God.[245] The *murti* at Pandupol is indeed a large, misshapen stone, L-shaped and about four feet long, but it has been daubed with orange color and has had eyes placed on it so that it resembles many of the simpler images of Hanuman found throughout Rajasthan. The temple, staffed by Brahmin *pujaris*, is extremely popular, and is associated in the minds of locals with two other temples which together constitute a trio of local sacred shrines and delineate a particular sacred zone. Lines of makeshift stands at each of the three locations sell small tripartite frames, each of the three frames containing a photo of the image of one of the three deities. Pandupol is the central shrine, the temple of Bharthari Baba is just outside the northern entrance of Sariska, and the temple of Narayani Mata is located south of Sariska and about seven kilometers south of Ghatra. The latter is dedicated to a local *sati* believed to be an incarnation of the goddess Durga, while the former appears to have Nath yogi associations, the image being set above a continuously burning fire, the ashes of which are used to place a *tilak* upon the foreheads of worshipers. A number of itinerant sadhus of

[245] Personal communication, June 23, 1998.

indeterminant sectarian affiliation frequent the shrine of Bharthari Baba seeking alms. Both sites feature bathing tanks apparently fed by natural underground springs, because of which they are said to have miraculous origins and are believed to have miraculous healing powers. Due to the location of Pandupol temple and its popularity, admission to Sariska National Park is free on Tuesdays, the day sacred to Hanuman

On the inner dome of the octagonal *chhatri* of Govinddas (d. 1834 CE) in Jaipur are eight painted panels with murals containing images of Hanuman. They are badly faded but one can still make out a number of figures, particularly those of Hanuman, Ganesh, and the ten avatars of Vishnu collectively referred to as *das avatar*. Very clear among the latter are the figures of Varaha, the Boar, and Narsingh, the man-lion, both of whom remain extremely popular in Jaipur where there are still annual *lilas* performed in which the costumed figure of the deity appears on the streets of the old city to the delight and often fear of the onlookers. In Rajgarh, where his other seat was located, there is a duplicate *chhatri* of Govinddas. It is an exact architectural replica of the cenotaph in Jaipur down to the placement of two marble images of a pair of feet at the center (one being that of Govinddas and the other that of his guru, Shivram) and the date indicating that he died in the month of *phalgun* in *Samvat* 1891. The eight panels in the Rajgarh *chhatri* are similarly faded, but the subject matter is quite different. True, one panel is a depiction of the ten avatars of Vishnu, with another being blank. But two panels contain illustrations of various yoga postures, with each panel depicting 48 different examples. Interestingly, the remaining four panels depict various scenes of courtly life of the time, perhaps indicating Govinddas' taste for such things and his reputation as a *crorepati*, or millionaire, the description most often used in describing not only him but his contemporary successor in Jaipur, Mahant Kailashdas. Two panels feature groups of performing musicians and female dancers: one depicts a regal procession in which a

mahant (presumably Govinddas himself) is being carried in a palanquin; the last features a *mahant* seated on a throne and greeting visitors. The dome contains a whirling miasma of *havelis*, and hundreds of human figures engaged in battle, courtly life and other pursuits of the time. In the very center of this fantastic mural is the figure of Krishna performing the *ras lila* with his milkmaid devotees.

But Hanuman and other Hindu deities appear in the murals of an even earlier *chhatri* of a Dadupanthi *mahant*. In the remote village of Jasrapur, west of Khetri in the district of Shekhawati, the *chhatri* of Dhanram was built within the monastic compound by his disciple Kanhardas. Kanhardas is believed to have died circa 1786 CE (Sharma n.d.) so that the memorial and its murals must date from at least the decade or so prior to that date. The paintings on the interior are remarkably clear and intact, although somewhat faded in places. Lower panels contain illustrations of a wide variety of Hindu deities: Lakshmi, Ganesh, Narsingh, Varaha, the fish avatar Matsya, and Krishna. The dome is replete with a wild phantasmagoria of figures and themes: the myth of the churning of the ocean, royal courts, yogis in various postures, *sants* seated at low tables reading manuscripts, soldiers bearing swords and muzzle-loading rifles, Hanuman leading an army against a ten-headed Ravana and his demons, a small mandir containing *Dadu Vani*[246] under a canopy flanked by two attendants waving ritual fly whisks. In addition to the *chhatri* of Dhanram, Kanhardas is supposed to have built in the hills about thirty kilometers away, with a reward of one hundred thousand rupees received from the Maharaja of Bikaner for having granted him a son as a boon, a two-story mandir with a shrine for *Dadu Vani* on the bottom and a shrine to Hanuman on the top.

The *math*, originally constructed by Dhanram, is located at the edge of the village on

[246] This is the earliest known iconographic representation of the worship of *Dadu Vani* in a temple.

the banks of a large, lovely pond. Long abandoned, the site has in recent years been occupied and reconstructed by Swami Purndas, a jovial, chain-smoking Dadupanthi sadhu with whom I once shared a bus seat from Naraina to Jaipur. Swami Purndas is a lean, middle-aged sadhu who always dresses in clean saffron robes, wears a gold watch, and smokes a relatively expensive brand of Indian cigarette. When he is not traveling from one Dadupanthi ascetic community to another, Purndas resides here by himself. A certain amount of his support comes from local villagers who seem pleased to have a religious personality in their midst. Since about 1994 or 1995 he has been collecting funds from the Dadupanthi community, and he is in the process of constructing a temple, known as Swami Kanhardas Asthal Mandir, in which the central shrine contains a Shiva linga. The linga was installed in a *pratishtha* ceremony in February, 1998 attended by Mahant Hariramji of Naraina, Swami Ram Prakash Vaidya of Jaipur, and other Dadupanthi dignitaries.

Also installed in the temple are statues of Hanuman, Durga, Lakshmi, and Krishna. On the outer faces of the temple's spire (*sikhara*) are four images of Shiva facing the cardinal directions. Below these are images of the same four: Hanuman, Durga, Lakshmi, and Krishna. On the four corners of the *sikhara* are images of the goddess Saraswati, a figure of a Vedic rishi, and two others which are not clearly distinguishable. Intrigued, I questioned Swami Purndas about this apparent contravention of the aniconic principles advocated by Dadu and Dadupanthis. His response[247] was similar to the response I had received from Dadupanthi Nagas when I questioned them about the historic tradition of Hanuman worship among them. Swami Purndas replied that, like all Dadupanthis, he personally only worships "Niranjan, the Nirakar deity." But, he added, he felt that local people would feel more "satisfied" when visiting the mandir, and indeed more willing to visit it, if it were to contain the aforementioned

[247] Personal communication, May 14, 1998.

deities. "You know, it's their tradition," he said expansively, if not a little defensively. "Me, I only worship Nirakar Brahma."

Chhatris and footprints

One of the distinctive features of Dadupanthi ritual is the use images of the two feet (*charan chinha*) and domed cenotaphs (*chhatri*) to mark the graves, or sometimes memorial spots, of deceased sadhus and *mahants*. *Chhatris* of Dadupanthi *mahants* and sadhus dating back to the latter half of the eighteenth century dot the countryside of the Jaipur district and neighboring districts of northern Rajasthan. Some are in quite remote areas, marking the spot where the individual ascetic died in battle or of natural causes. Others are located wherever he may have died. Half a dozen are within the city of Jaipur. Although originally constructed beyond the city walls near Ram Niwas Gardens and in the sandy hills in the area known as Fateh Tibba, they are now completely surrounded by residential neighborhoods or commercial properties. At Bhairana are the *charan chinhas* of hundreds of sadhus while at Naraina, in a small garden behind the *barahdari* of the present *mahant*, are the *chhatris* of eleven previous *mahants* going back to Mahant Jaitramji.[248] All are objects of devotion and *puja*, particularly that of Mahant Jaitram.

The *chhatri* of Dhanram at Jasrapur may be one of the earliest examples of such Dadupanthi cenotaphs, and certainly contains some of the earliest paintings. Even though Jaitram and other *mahants* of the eighteenth century died prior to him, their *chhatris* at Naraina may well have been constructed later. Until the seventeenth century the *chhatri* was in practice restricted to Rajput royalty and marked the site of the individual's cremation. The art historian Hermann Goetz describes its basic form as "a stone canopy resting on four,

[248] Significantly, there are no markers for the graves of Naraina Mahants who preceded Jaitram.

twelve, or more columns built over the actual funeral stone, under which the ashes of the deceased may or may not have been buried, on or near the spot of the actual cremation" (Goetz 1950, 64). In some cases, as when the individual had died in battle at a great distance, two *chhatris* were constructed: one at the actual site of cremation, and one within the home territory which served a commemorative function (Mishra 1991, 94). It is a distinctly Rajput architectural style and largely restricted to the region of Rajasthan, the earliest extant example of which is believed to be the cenotaph of Jaitra Singh at Ranthambor dating from circa 1290 CE (ibid, 91). Goetz (1950, 64) has theorized that the origins of the *chhatri* lie in the wooden sheds which tribal peoples in Rajputana and central India used to erect over the memorial wooden posts and stone tablets marking the burial or cremation sites of the dead. Thousands of such free-standing stone slabs, known as *govardhan*, *paliya* or *deval* stones, are still visible throughout Rajasthan, some dating even from the first millennium CE. Later, the *devals* erected for renowned Rajput warriors and male and female Rajput royalty commonly consisted of a platform, or plinth (*chatvar*), of stone or marble surmounted by a *chhatri* which served to protect it from the elements and to provide shade for those coming to offer their respects (Singh 1995-96, 20). Influenced to some degree by Mughal architecture, the Rajput *chhatri* began in the seventeenth century to exhibit fluted columns, cusped arches and an onion dome surmounted by an inverted lotus (Tillotson 1987, 143). Those constructed after the seventeenth century tend to be marble. This is the style of all Dadupanthi cenotaphs.

The construction of memorial *chhatris* for sadhus or religious personalities appears to be a late development, with few examples prior to the eighteenth century.[249] Goetz mentions

[249] Dominique-Sila Khan refers to the construction of *chhatris* outside the temple of Harji Bhatti near the town of Osiyan in the Jodhpur district, clearly Islamic in its origins, to indicate a "recent rajputization of the tradition" (1997. 89).

two earlier examples in Bikaner State but they seem to be rather exceptional. The *chhatri* of Sri Parasuram Giri, a Shaiva *sannyasi*, was constructed at the pilgrimage center of Kolayat in VS 1749 (1692 CE); and in VS 1797 (1740 CE) Maharaja Zorawar Singh built a *chhatri* near Bikaner's Junagarh Fort for his *rajpurohit* Jagramji, who had been killed in battle (Goetz 1950, 66). The latter clearly has Rajput connections and in that sense is not quite so unique as the former. However, no religious group in Rajasthan has adopted the use of the memorial *chhatri* to a greater extent than the Dadu Panth, although the practice is also common among the Jains of northern Rajasthan, who may have first introduced the practice of constructing cenotaphs of this style for deceased ascetics.[250] If one were to wonder why Jains would have adopted distinctively Rajput architecture for religious purposes, it should be pointed out that many of the Jains of Jaipur and northern Rajasthan, while seemingly quite distinct from Rajputs in ideology, are believed to be related to them. The Osval Jains in particular claim to be descended from Rajputs in Osiyan, north of Jodhpur, who converted to Jainism and gave up Rajput customs centuries earlier. Although the idea that the nonviolent Jains are descended from heroic, warlike Rajputs seems somehow unlikely, Lawrence Babb has found during his extensive fieldwork among the Jains of Jaipur that it is a tradition strongly asserted to be true by the Jains themselves, and that "(v)irtually everyone......takes as beyond dispute the general proposition that (Rajasthani) Jains were once Rajputs" (Babb 1993, 8).

The only significant difference between a Rajput or royal *chhatri* and that of a sadhu or religious personality is that the latter typically displays a pair of foot impressions (*charan chinha*) over a lotus design on the central slab. These are not actual impressions of the feet; rather, they are raised, stylized images of the feet. Each Naraina mahant since Jaitram and

[250] Catherine Asher (personal communication, March 29, 2000) notes that the earliest known Jain cenotaph in Amer that features both *chhatri* and *charan chinha* is one at the Digambara Stambha Nasiyan in the town of Amer which dates from between 1621 and 1634 CE.

each leading Naga mahant since 1779 has his own cenotaph in this uniquely Rajput style. If, as the tradition has it, Gangaram was named "Mahant of the *Chhatris*" in 1755 CE as a resolution to the power struggle between the Nagas and other factions within the Dadu Panth, then the first *chhatris* in Naraina had been erected prior to that date, very probably during the twenty-year period of the Naraina mahant's exile when the Nagas held sway there. Even earlier figures such as Raghodas, Rajjab and Sundardas the Younger are said to have had *chhatris* constructed for them in the late seventeenth century, although most of these have collapsed or been looted and can no longer be viewed. Only the memorial footprints have been saved from the cenotaph of Sundardas in Sanganer. The pond at Naraina is surrounded by numerous *chhatris* and others are scattered throughout the countryside of Rajasthan; Bhairana and other sites sacred to Dadupanthis have hundreds of marble plinths with foot impressions to memorialize ordinary sadhus. In the nineteenth century, wealthy Marwari merchants, particularly in the region (now district) of Shekhawati also began to have memorial *chhatris* constructed as their funerary memorials. Many of these, which resemble the Rajput, Jain and Dadupanthi examples, still dot the urban and rural landscape of Shekhawati.

Mangaldas speaks at some length of the practice of worshiping the *mahants* of various *thambhas*, especially after their deaths. This adheres to the pattern of worship of the guru which was characteristic of not only the Dadu Panth, but indeed of most communities considered to be a part of the bhakti movement.[251] He shows that it was common to prostrate oneself before the guru and make him an offering, to seek benefit from worship of the foot imprints, to attend the melas and gatherings at Naraina, Ghatra, and Haridas' *thambha* at Hindaun. He tells of the celebrations and offerings following the death of his own guru, Totaram, and describes the funeral and *samadhi* of Totaram's guru, Gaibiram.

[251] For a discussion of the significant role of the guru figure in North Indian *sant* traditions, See Daniel Gold 1987.

14.1.

No karma affects the *sants* of the golden *kotari.*[252]
In this way, by remembering Hari guru they obtain
riddhis and *siddhis.*[253]
Night and day the highest truth of bhakti is the profound wisdom
of the Guru's words,
(Pilgrimage to) holy sites, fasting, images, meditation
on Niranjan in the heart.
The sadhu who feels true love bows his head at the place
of the guru and makes an offering at his feet.
The religion of the people of Haridas (i.e., Nagas) is linked
to Banaras-style learning.[254]

14.2.

Together, Tulsi and Kirparam were satisfied sadhus.
Besides offering refuge to lovers (of God),
they worshipped the *thambhas.*
Then Asanand obtained the *gaddi* of guru Jairam.
Mangal: everyone made offerings, each at his own place.

14.3.

.....

At Sadaram's place, worship of the *sant*-guru flourished.
With pure love, everyone appreciated the benefit
(obtained from) the footprints.

....

14.5.

The *thambhas* of Tursi and Mukund of the *kotari* are honored.
Prem and Mast(ram) eliminated all of the bad Asavats[255]
The Hirdavat Nagas[256] support several other *thambhas.*
They offer *bhent* and good will to all establishments of the young,
militaristic followers of Hridai.

14.6.

Keval(ram) and Chatur(das) came from the lineage of
Shyam and Raghav(das).

[252] That is, the thirteenth *kotari.*
[253] Literally, "wealth" and "attainments" meaning material and spiritual powers.
[254] Banaras was known as a center for the study of the classical texts of the Vedas and *shastras.*
[255] That is, the followers of Asanand. It is not clear what Mangaldas is referring to here.
[256] That is, the followers of Hridairam.

Uddhav's followers felt longing and spread bhakti.
All take refuge at the feet of Haridas of Hindaun.
They all meet at Sundar's "throne" at Ghatra and glory
in the dust of his feet.

14.7.
Each guru on his own feels bound to serve the *kotari's thambha.*[257]
Mahants and *sants* meet and express their good will and faith
at the festival of Gurudeva (in this case, Dadu).
Swami Dadu appeared on *phalgun sudi* 8,
It is essential for all (that) they should (celebrate) this festival
in an auspicious manner.

14.8.
In this way, the 52 *thambhas* make offerings when they meet
at the festival.
That festival renews allegiance (as the head) to the holder
of the seat of Nirakar at Naraina.
We offer service to that Swami, guru Dadu, whose state was
(that of) Hari.
Mangal says, offer service to this post of divine Dadu at this place
(Naraina).

14.27.
This *dham* was built in the year VS 1880 (1823 CE).
On Thursday, *baisakh sudi* 12 they sang of Hari at Ram Tiba.
The divine guru creates wealth, improved behavior,
service to people.
For the guru who has attained liberation and met Hari,
it is auspicious to build his *samadhi.*
Listen, the time was *phalgun sudi* 9 when (he gained) control
of the world through *siddhis* and *niddhis.*
He attained nirvana on the guru's day (Thursday);
people sat for his funeral procession in Haripur.[258]

14.28.
Sri Guru Gaibiram's platform shrine with his footprints.
Dadu determined the character of the *gaddis*

[257] That is, the *thambha* of Haridas in Hindaun.
[258] Verses 14.27-14.33 refer to Gaibiram, the guru of Mangaldas' guru Totaram, who lived from VS 1800-1866 (1743-1809 CE).

by establishing 52 *thambhas*.

14.29.
Dadupanthi sadhus who maintain *puja* are themselves
worthy of being worshipped.
Those who discriminate come before the guru; those who do not
discriminate are without any divine guru.

14.30.
In (VS)1866 (1809 CE) gurus gave 25 rupees each.
The gurus' wealth was noteworthy, up to many hundreds (of rupees).

14.31.
The gurus always created wealth, the gurus donated five kitchens.
The gurus abandoned wealth but, on the other hand,
they keep very little.

14.32.
In (VS)1800 he took a soul (was born) *paush sudi* 12, beloved.
Mangal says, Gaibiram, who attained Hari, was delivered
from his burden.

14.33.
The guru attained nirvana and joined Hari, but some
of his wealth remained.
In (VS) 1874 (1817 CE) there was a *yagya* (sacrifice)
and his samadhi was erected.

14.34.
The wealthy guru Totaramji, having abandoned time, wealth and delusion
was an immortal river of the highest spiritual good.
Mangal says, in his heart he was a *vairagi*.

14.35.
The land is vast around the *samadhi* (marking the site)
of the nirvana of Guru Totaram.
On *baisakh sudi* 5, the warrior gurus are present.
In the morning the warrior gurus lead an Arabian horse
(to his *samadhi*).
The moon of accomplishment, the skilled and auspicious
lord of 70 years.

The assembly, doing auspicious work in service of the *sants*,
built a grand, three-doored gateway (*tripolia*), a bungalow,
a *chhatri*, and an auspicious, meritorious granary for times of hunger.

....

14.37.

Mahants and parties of *sants* have festivals, *arati*,
Do *pranam*, distribute *prasad*, at the place of Totaram's union
with Hari.

Twice, in verses 14.13 and 14.28, Mangaldas mentions the foot impressions and the benefit to be obtained from offering devotion to them. This, too, is a practice which may have developed due to Jain influence. The Rajasthani Jains, besides adapting the superstructure of the Rajput *chhatri* as did the Dadupanthis, also symbolized the deceased ascetic by establishing an image of his, or sometimes her, feet. Babb has noted that in the important Rajasthani cult of the Dadagurus, who were famed historical ascetics, they "are usually worshipped in the form of foot images" (Babb 1998, 111). He does admit that in recent times anthropomorphic images have also become common to represent the objects of worship, a development which has never been adopted by the iconoclastic Dadupanthis. Yet the foot images still maintain their primacy, for "even when there is an anthropomorphic image there are usually footprints too" (ibid). Significantly, these images, which are located within the temples known as Dadabaris, are enshrined in still smaller structures that are built to resemble the Rajput funerary monuments. It is noteworthy, however, that with few exceptions only the memorial cenotaphs or shrines erected by Jains or Dadupanthis contain both architectural elements: the *chhatri* and the plinth bearing an image of the footprints of the deceased.

The *puja* performed at the Dadabaris is much more complex than that which takes place at the *chhatris* of the Dadupanthi *mahants*.[259] In fact, for the most part they attract little ritual attention except on special occasions. On any given day, a few local women or visitors

[259] For details of *puja* in the Jain Dadabaris of Jaipur, See Laidlaw 1995, Babb 1998.

from out of town will visit the cenotaphs of the Naraina *mahants*, perhaps offering flowers and lighting some incense. Even then, most devotees and visitors focus on the *samadhi* of Mahant Jaitram to the virtual exclusion of the others. There may be several reasons for this. Firstly, there is his reputation as the one who established the Dadu Panth in its present form and as a "second Dadu" whose appearance was foretold by Dadu. Then there is the water. The plinth on which his foot images are carved is movable, and beneath it is a deep hollow containing water which is supposed to have curative properties. At the time of the mela in March, great numbers of devotees flock to Jaitram's cenotaph for *darshan* and to perform the traditional elements of pilgrimage and *puja*: they circumambulate and then prostrate, placing on the *charan chinhas* flowers, coins, food offerings, incense, small oil lamps. They daub them with vermilion or turmeric paste while reciting Sanskrit mantras. During this busy period a *pujari* sits beside the foot images and applies a *tilak* of *sindoor* on the forehead of each worshiper.

Among other innovations, Jaitram had tried to solidify the focus of devotion and obedience of the entire order on the mahant occupying the throne of Naraina. In the century after he took control of the Naraina *gaddi*, there was periodic resistance to that centralization of power. However, in verse 14.8, Mangaldas reasserts that one purpose of the mela is to give all sadhus an opportunity to reassert their allegiance to the *gaddi*. In other references, he makes it clear that the Naraina mahant is considered to wield the ultimate authority within the panth.[260]

Communal meals and the distribution of food

[260] The *gaddi* is both actual and symbolic. During the annual mela in the month of *phalgun* in 1998, Mahant Jaitram was extremely ill and lay on a bed not far from his usual place on a broad sort of sofa that served as his *gaddi*. People who came in for darshan could clearly see the mahant lying on the bed, but nonetheless went to take darshan of the *gaddi*.

Mangaldas mentions here and there in *Bansadipika* other religious practices that had become common among the Dadupanthis. The Nagas as well as other Dadupanthi communities seem to have made a point to store food for seasons of want. Not only was it for their own consumption, but it was also for the poor and needy. The institutionalization of this daily distribution of food to the hungry as well as to the sadhus, known as *sadavrat*, occurred quite early. This would certainly explain why the *bhandari* (the keeper of the stores whose traditional insignia was the key to the lock of the storeroom) was, and is, considered second only to the mahant in prestige and importance.[261] Offerings of food, particularly in the form of communal meals, are described as having been a staple of melas and other gatherings of devotees such as on the occasion of the death of a sadhu or mahant.

> 11.15.
> For people of the world, the mind is eased by food and drink,
> yogurt and ghee.
> From Hari Pratap (i.e., Hari Singh) to Chain,
> they were able to steadfastly distribute food to the poor.
>
> 9.26.
> Sundar(das) is revealed in a splendorous light.
> (When) a *rishi* has recently died, there will be
> the benefit of food for the community.
> An offering to Hari of the best quality parched millet is made
> at the feet of the *muni*.
> On 14th *sudi* in the month of *asoj*, my virtuous friend and intimate
> friend (died).
> (Whether) the heart is attached to the the treasury of truth,
> or to the treasury of money, the desired fruit is obtained.
> Mangal says, at the mela on the 14th (of *asoj sudi*) *bhent*
> and food are offered endlessly.

The gathering together for such communal meals is at least one practice which traces

[261] For a discussion of the significant role, both symbolic and actual, of food in the Dadu Panth, see Monika Horstmann's unpublished 1999 paper, "The Flow of Grace: Food and Feast in the Hagiography and History of the Dadu Panth." She particularly discusses the practice of *sadavrat* and the significance of the *bhandari*.

its origins to the time of Dadu himself, for Mangaldas mentions the "weekly communal meals" at Dadu's residence in Sambhar when Sundardas would visit him. In her paper, "The Flow of Grace: Food and Feast in the Hagiography and History of the Dadupanth," Monika Horstmann (1999) has elaborated upon the accounts of common meals and the significant role of the distribution of food as they appear in the *Dadu Janam Lila* of Jan Gopal. The offering and sharing of food has remained an essential practice among Dadupanthi ascetics to this day.[262] Unrestricted commensality seems to have been the practice at the festivals and accompanying feasts which were offered to Dadu in his travels throughout Amer and neighboring Marwar. It was only later, due to pressure from Sawai Jai Singh II, that certain groups such as Muslims and unclean castes would have been prevented from sitting with other diners.

Known as *pangat*, from *pankti* (a line, specifically the line in which diners are seated), this is still an important aspect of all Dadupanthi gatherings on festival occasions, having much the same significance as the comparable Sikh tradition of the *langar*. In addition, it is a practice maintained by the present-day followers of Raidas, the *nirgun sant* of Varanasi.[263] It is a periodic reconfirmation of the unity of the panth and the equality of its adherents, symbolized by all sitting on the ground in lines unsegregated by gender, age, or social position. I participated in such meals at the Dadudwara in Amer on *vasant panchami*, at Dadu Mahavidyalay in Jaipur on the occasion of the celebration of the anniversary of Dadu's passing, at Bhairana during the ceremonies celebrating the completion of the *pad yatra* from

[262] Here I should distinguish between the spontaneous offering of food to visitors, which is characteristic of the Rajasthani culture of hospitality in general, and the preparation and distribution of food to devotees on special occasions. Regarding the former, I rarely if ever visited a Dadupanthi *math*, *dwara*, or *thambha* without being offered and served an often substantial meal (or tea, depending on the time of day).

[263] In 1996-97, I visited the Raidas temple near Banaras Hindu University on several occasions and was invited to join such communal meals which may reflect direct Sikh influence as Sikhs also revere Raidas and, on certain occasions such as Raidas Jayanti, visit the *mandir* in great numbers.

Amer, and in Naraina during the annual mela celebrating the birth of Dadu. Even when I would make solo, unannounced visits to remote Dadupanthi temples, *maths* or *thambhas*, the offering and sharing of food was an important duty for the host sadhus.

Sometimes there were several hundred diners at organized events. During the annual festival at Naraina in March there were at times more than 4000, who had to be seated in parallel lines in shifts in a large, open field normally used for cricket by young *chelas* and local boys. On most occasions sadhus would sit here and there amongst other diners, although at Naraina a number of them were seated together in a special line where Mahant Hariramji would also come to sit. The only instance of "discrimination" in seating that I observed was on one occasion in Naraina when half a dozen Shaiva sadhus, who must have been in the area and heard of the meal, tried to sit next to the Dadupanthi sadhus. Several of the latter told them in a rather gruff and abrupt manner to sit separately, but other Dadupanthi sadhus remonstrated with them for their narrow mindedness and insisted that the Shaiva sadhus be allowed to stay. After a good deal of wrangling, the Shaiva sadhus were allowed to remain in the same line as the Dadupanthi sadhus, but formed their own group at the end of the line.

When all were seated, Mahant Hariramji would enter, accompanied by a trumpeter sounding an ancient silver horn and a staff-bearer bearing a tall silver staff, both of whom stood immediately behind him throughout the meal. Once the mahant was seated and had taken his first bite, other diners would begin. Typically, the vegetarian meal would consist of *dal, puri*, and *ladoos* or a dish of sweetened barley. Sometimes it would consist of typical Rajasthani fare: *dal, bhatti, churma.* On smaller occasions there would often be a vegetable of some type and even pickles. Such communal meals on special occasions or during festivals are not too far removed from the description offered by Jan Gopal of the month-long feast offered by Garibdas in 1604 following the death of Dadu. In Callewaert's (1988) translation

of the *Dadu Janam Lila*, the description brings the event to life.

16.7
Garib Das collected all the provisions, with a pure mind
and total generosity, not considering the cost.
Rice, lentils, wheat, ghee, flour and sugar
were supplied in abundance.

16.8.
Some took uncooked rice
while others had prepared meals.
The celebrations were organized in May
and lasted for a full month.

16.9
For the whole month the religious celebration continued
and all Sants were given festive attire.
All supplies contributed to the celebrations
were donated by the homes.

16.10
Great quantities of phirni were made,
because this had been a favorite sweet of Svamiji.
There were disciples of Ram Das,
Bagha, Narain and Devi Das,
all well accomplished in devotion to Hari.

16.11
Day and night the singing went on,
everybody was singing joyfully.
All sants were given clothes,
thin cloth for (filtering) water and a loin-cloth.

16.12
Wrinkled leaves drop during March,
but in December everything looks green again.
Garib Das provided everyone with clothes,
giving to all who had come from outside.

16.13.
He had thick clothes distributed to everybody

> and made no distinction between outsiders and followers.
> Dried coconuts, dates, clover (sic)[264] and sweets
> were continuously given in abundance.

During such feasts, numerous volunteers scurry back and forth between the lines of diners and the enormous cooking pots, offering continuous and endless refills. As they offer the food, they say "*dal Ram*," "*puri Ram*," "*sabzi Ram*," "*ladoo Ram*," and so on, a variation on the standard Dadupanthi greeting of "Dadu Ram, Satya Ram" that substantializes the food as an aspect of *nirgun* Ram, just as the principal mantra of greeting substantializes Dadu as an aspect of "Truth Ram" (*Satya* Ram). Still an important greeting, and thus a marker of religious identity, its power of purification is attested to by Mangaldas in a couplet from *Bansadipika*.

> 9.29.
> Can an insincere renunciant who grasps the essence
> of Lakshmi (*Sri*) enjoy Niranjan Ram?
> "Dadu Ram, *Satya* Ram" is the *prasad* of the guru
> which makes a *dham* auspicious.

Attire of the Nagas

Monika Horstmann (1999) has discussed in her unpublished paper the apparent lack of any distinctive kind of clothing in the early years of the Dadu Panth. The verses from Jan Gopal quoted above (16.11-16.13) indicate that donated clothing was given to sadhus of all types. Gradually, it seems, each division developed its own sartorial style as a means of asserting its independent identity. Even today, *khalsa* and Naga sadhus wear white dhotis while *virakt* sadhus and others wear saffron robes. The illustrations from Dhanram's *chhatri* in Jasrapur show him wearing an ochre or crimson robe while the sadhus around him,

[264] i.e., cloves.

presumably his disciples, wear white robes with a colorful block print design resembling the cloth still produced in the town of Sanganer near the Jaipur airport. Everyone in the illustrations is wearing a distinctive round cap which is no longer seen among Dadupanthis.

In a number of verses of *Bansadipika*, Mangaldas mentions enough about the dress of Nagas that one can get an impression of their outward appearance and its significance to them. It may be recalled that sometime in the early eighteenth century there had been a protest ostensibly led by Kevalram and Hridairam over the maintenance by Naga sadhus of such outward signs of their Rajput heritage as beard, mustache, and hairstyle. Although there is no clear evidence one way or the other, it may be presumed that these attributes were common among them from the early years and the issue only came to a head when Mahant Jaitramji tried to enforce a change.

According to Mangaldas, Dadupanthi sadhus are distinguished by wearing a white *dhoti*, the traditional covering for men in that region of Rajasthan and other regions of northern India. He uses the wearing of it to distinguish them from Shaiva *sannyasis*, Naths, and other types of yogis. Significantly, he does not refer separately to Vaishnava sadhus, who typically also wear white, and associates the wearing of the *dhoti* with the image of Hanuman, who was worshipped by Ramanandi sadhus as well as Dadupanthi Nagas. As has been shown, the Dadupanthi Nagas did at a certain point begin to worship Hanuman, possibly in emulation of or as a result of the influence of Ramanandi Nagas, and as a way to begin to assert the Vaishnava identity they now claim. The *dhoti* remains the preferred form of clothing, particularly for the *khalsa* sadhus of Naraina who frequently emphasized their preference for it. Certain lineages of Dadupanthi sadhus also adopted the wearing of a flat, white cotton cap with rather unique ear flaps, a style of cap still occasionally seen on *uttaradhi* sadhus, while the majority wear white (or saffron, depending on the lineage) turbans

on formal or ceremonial occasions and remain bareheaded the rest of the time.

Mangaldas mentions the wearing of both saffron and red turbans by Naga sadhus, both quite distinct from the white turban more commonly worn by sadhus of the different Vaishnava and *nirgun* communities and now worn by Dadupanthi Nagas as well. It may be that saffron was the preferred color during times of war, for that was the color worn by Rajputs during battle. Traditionally, they would even put on saffron robes at the time of *jauhar*, or battle to the death. Saffron, from the time of its adoption by Buddhist monks, has been regarded as the color most closely associated with renunciation in Indian culture. Thus, for Rajput warriors going into battle for the final time it was a symbolic renunciation of their worldly lives. For Dadupanthi Naga sadhus, however, it would have represented the opposite, a symbolic association with their worldly Rajput identities.

> 9.1.
> In the system of the stages of life, religious men (wear) *langota*
> from birth to death.
> (When) people are born (they) are grasped by the form of laws and
> regulations, and (their) heads (become) fat.
> Part of the strip of cloth from a *langota* forms a sheet of
> garment around the waist of the *sannyasi*.
> The yogi *sampraday* are wearers of a woolen loincloth.
> Naths wear whatever their heart desires;
> sadhus wear the knot of truth.
> Mangal says, (as) Hanuman tied (on) a *dhoti*,
> so the Dadupanthi guru wears it.
>
> .....
>
> 9.18.
> Bhagwan gave the command to give bhakti,
> and the guru gave the Ram mantra.
> Other disciples later adopted cap, cloak and scarf.
>
> 9.19.
> The cap, *mala*, belt, loincloth and *langota*.
> Whenever there comes a loss or decline, Bhagwan bears
> the Supreme Soul, Hari.

9.20.
Godly people give homage to Bhagwan, they sing the *bij* mantra.
Mangal says, age after age Prabhu and the state of Hari are attained
by those who rely upon (the right) outward appearance.

9.21.
The charioteer (should be) firm and constant, intelligent,
with a *langota* folded (around him).
Mangal says, (he should have) beard, hair in the style of a
Brahmin,[265] and faultless tangled locks.

....

9.24.
Saffron turbans, radiant faces, deep meditation on Hari,
patchwork garments. These remind them of Hari.
(In the) ashram, ascetics have a wooden water-pot,
a long, knee-length cloak, open-toed sandals on their feet
and also a yellow robe.[266]
(When) Lakshmi is present, or Gauri (Parvati) in her own form,
then firstly *pan* (betel) and food are offered as *prasad*.
Mangal says, he experienced an intense, radiant light continuously.
Because of this, the foremost guru is Guru Dadu.

Although many of these distinctive styles of dress that identified the sectarian affiliation of a sadhu or characterized him as belonging to a particular lineage within that tradition have fallen into disuse, during the period of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries they were both common and quite diverse. For Mangaldas, they held great significance. Only rarely these days does one see a sadhu, Dadupanthi or other, bearing the water pot (*kamandalu*) or wearing the open-toed sandals (*khadaun*) that until the latter half of the twentieth century were commonly seen on sadhus of many persuasions. Unlike the sadhus of other communities, Dadupanthi sadhus never adopted the use of sectarian marks

[265] That is, with one long lock (*choti*) coming out of the top of the head.

[266] A nineteenth-century portrait from Bikaner of Swami Balakdas, which is in the collection of Ram Kripalu Sharma of Jaipur, perfectly illustrates this description. Described as a disciple of Dadu, Swami Balakdas is depicted seated in the lotus position on a low wooden platform dressed in the simple saffron garb of a *virakt* Dadupanthi sadhu. His head is shaven. He holds a mala of one beads in one hand. Beside him are a brass water pot, a pair of open-toed sandals, and a wooden arm support.

(*tilak*) on the forehead or the wearing of *malas* around the neck; certainly they don't today[267] and there are no textual references regarding their use. In practice, then, it is difficult these days to distinguish Dadupanthi sadhus from sadhus of other traditions.

The shifting appearance of Dadupanthi religious practice

In the early decades of the Dadupanthi community, many of his devotees who had adopted renunciatory lifestyles followed his example by composing poetry and songs on spiritual themes, and then collecting them into volumes. For inspiration they relied upon the reading and understanding of *Dadu Vani*, just such a collection. They also began to incorporate other spiritual approaches which were being practiced in other Hindu monastic communities and were thus available for emulation and incorporation. These included the study of the Vedas and *shastras*, various types of yoga and meditation, communal singing, and so on. At the time of the composition of the *Bhaktamal* by Raghodas in 1660 CE, these were the primary sorts of devotional activities engaged in by the communities of sadhus.

Mahant Jaitramji of Naraina is still credited today with establishing the Dadu Panth as a religious path distinct from other, competing paths. During his tenure the Dadu Panth forsook accepting Muslims and members of non-twice-born castes as sadhus, established codes of dress and behavior, reified other practices such as the annual mela, the distribution of food, and patterns of behavior between *mahants* and their disciples.[268] It is unclear whether all

[267] There are occasional exceptions, such as Swami Ram Dayaldas, a sadhu from the town of Bichun who usually lives in Jaipur when he is not traveling about the country visiting Dadupanthi householders. He wears clean saffron robes, diamond jewelry and a mala of brightly colored stones.
[268] Horstmann (1999c, 16-23) presents her translation of the "Panthapaddhati" of Jnandas, a problematic text of uncertain date and origin, a portion of which was published by Swami Kaniram in 1986. Horstmann places the date of composition no later than 1827 CE. Several of the specifics of the text are particularly relevant to this study: the offering of a special position in the *pankti* to the Nagas, who sat at the right hand of the Naraina mahant; the establishment of footprints (*charan chinha*) on the *samadhi* of a sadhu, though no mention is made of *chhatris*; the great significance given to the cohesive rituals of the annual mela and *sadavrat*.

of his efforts at reformation and systemization of the organization were in response to the wishes of Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II, or based upon his own initiative; certainly some, such as the exclusion of Muslims, were in direct response to the edicts of the Maharaja and others adhered to the general thrust of Sawai Jai Singh's reformations. At a time in the 1720s when the latter was demanding compliance with the basic tenets of Vaishnava faith as he understood them, Mahant Jaitram must have made further efforts to bring Dadupanthi beliefs and practices into nominal alignment with other Vaishnava communities.

It was during his tenure, too, that there were interactions with the expanding Sikh religious community at a time when, under the leadership of Guru Gobind Singh, it too was establishing a clearer identity with the formation of the armed Khalsa in 1699 CE, and was beginning to reify the role of the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Guru Gobind Singh and Jaitram are said to have met twice: one Sikh publication suggests that they met once in late 1706 when the Guru stopped in Naraina to visit the Mahant, and again in Burhanpur sometime the following year (1990, 233-237).[269] The *uttaradhis*, situated in Haryana and Punjab, had constant interaction with Sikhs; and the Dadupanthi Nagas fought alongside Sikh mercenaries in the armies of Jawahar Singh of Bharatpur in 1767 (Pande 1970, 94) as well as in the armies of Jaipur during the reign of Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh (1778-1803 CE) (Bahura 1988, 44).

While the majority of Nagas were engaged in literary production and spiritual cultivation during the seventeenth century, Raghodas has indicated that some were already roaming about in (possibly armed) groups by the middle of that century. They also are mentioned as visiting the Ramanandi monastic center of Galta where those sadhus too were beginning the process of arming themselves and organizing military-style bands. Given this

[269] Their meeting is part of Dadupanthi lore, but aside from the one obscure reference in a book published by the Sikh Missionary Center of Detroit, I found nothing to support it in Sikh writings. However, in 1998 the construction of a new Gurudwara commemorating Guru Gobind Singh's visit to Naraina was completed there, although I was assured that there are no Sikhs actually living in the town.

proximity, and the fact that both groups were composed of substantial numbers of local Rajputs, it is not inconceivable, indeed it is likely, that they traveled and trained together. In the course of such extended contacts, some degree of ideological exchange would be expected. It was the militant Rajput leadership of the Nagas, particularly in the persons of Kevalram and Hridairam, that first resisted the imposition of uniform standards by Jaitram and later established *akharas* of armed sadhus in emulation of the Ramanandis. They, too, are credited by Mangaldas with the elevation of *Dadu Vani* to iconic status and the construction of temples to house it. As the Nagas accumulated power based upon patronage and the wealth acquired through mercenary activities, they were able to institute changes which were accepted to one degree or another by other divisions of the Dadu Panth. As Rajputs who had not fully renounced their Rajput value systems, who in some respects tried to merge their warrior and ascetic identities, they introduced the usage of distinctively Rajput memorial *chhatris*. More subtly, their example of independence encouraged other Dadupanthi sadhus and *mahants* who received royal patronage to introduce their own innovations, such as the shrines to Hanuman constructed by Mahant Nirbhairam, or the distinctive clothing worn by Dhanram and his disciples.

It was Sawai Jai Singh's intention to unite the various strands of Vaishnava devotionalism into one cohesive whole adhering to defined principles and forsaking practices and philosophies viewed as inimical. He met with some success, although ultimately he did not achieve his aim. Yet the shift toward a Vaishnava ideology begun by the Dadu Panth almost three hundred years ago has resulted in a continued gradual, though perhaps sporadic, movement in the direction of Vaishnavism and *sanatan dharm*, the "Hindu religion" as it extends back through the ages to antiquity and the Vedas. This is apparent in the claim by most Dadupanthis today, even sadhus, that they are essentially a Vaishnava sect.

It also appears in small incidents. In the preface to his life of Dadu (Narayandas 1975), the writer Swami Narayandas claims that Dadu was the incarnation of the Vedic *rishi* Sanaka who manifested in the world to bring not only the message of bhakti, but also Vedic knowledge. It is hardly surprising to find this use of the legitimating power of the past and of the Vedas, this movement toward Sanskritization, but to my knowledge it is a concept introduced by Narayandas himself. At another time I was introduced to Swami Atmaram, a scholarly Dadupanthi sadhu from rural Shekhawati who presented me a copy of his magnum opus, a translation of *Dadu Vani* (Atmaram 1994) into Sanskrit. When I inquired why he should feel it necessary to translate from Dadu's vernacular into Sanskrit, the language of classical Hindu texts, he replied that it was so that in future generations scholars could still read and understand Dadu's words "in the language of the gods."

In this way, the teachings and even earthly career of Dadu are being more and more brought into alignment with normative Vaishnava belief through the agency of the legitimating power of Sanskrit and the Vedas. It is a process that began even earlier, for Mangaldas himself had included one long verse (9.36) in pure Sanskrit, a hymn to Dadu entitled *Dadu Gayatri*, and had also written:

> 13.1.
> He took the form of true Niranjan, Dadu avatar.
> Sundar (had) skill, Dayal devotion, and Prahlad
> radiance without blemish.
> Hari in the form of Vishnu nurtures and protects the world.
> Devotees, those in the lineage of Raghav(das),
> give expression to the divine.
> Shyamdas, a form of Shiva, himself gave the riches of recitation,
> ascetic practice, and yoga.
> Mangal says, Constantly meditating upon the divine guru
> opens the treasury of love and service.

Mangaldas speaks of Dadu as the avatar, the incarnated "form" of the formless

Niranjan, but other names commonly applied to Niranjan included Ram and Hari. So when, in another line, Mangaldas writes that "Hari in the form of Vishnu (who incarnated as Ram and Krishna) nurtures and protects the world," he is associating Dadu with the deity in what might be termed a very "Vaishnava manner." Remarkably, he immediately equates Shyamdas with Shiva by referring to him as "a form of Shiva."

It is very likely that such ideas always existed to one degree or another in elements of the Dadu Panth; it is only more recently that they appear to take on a greater ideological force. The most telling example is to be found in the relatively new temple in the remote mountainside ashram at Bhairana, the spot where both Dadu and Sundardas meditated in a cave and where Dadu's body was left for the animals. Like other Dadudwaras,[270] there is little carving or illustration on either the outer or inner walls, aside from verses from *Dadu Vani* that are etched on the wall just below the ceiling around the entire circumference of the main hall. The recessed central shrine, really a small room, contains only a small stand with a copy of *Dadu Vani* wrapped in ochre cloth and a few ritual implements. However, just to the right of the shrine is a large, brilliantly colored painting which was added sometime in the early 1990s. It depicts a youthful-looking Dadu being carried on a palanquin by two heavenly-looking beings. Above him, in the clouds, are Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, who gaze lovingly at Dadu while sprinkling flower petals down upon him. The obvious soteriological message is that Dadu has inherited the mantle of divinity of Vedic and Hindu gods, that he has in a sense supplanted them. What I found striking was the way Dadupanthi sadhus and laymen alike reacted when passing before this image. They always did so with a certain tension and with uncertainty, perhaps reflecting the conflicting ideologies of many of the Dadupanthis of

[270] On the back cover of the most recent edition of *Dadu Vani* published by the Naraina Mahant, Sri Hariramji, there is a photograph of the building, labeled "Sri Dadu Mandir." The increasingly common usage of *mandir* (temple) interchangeably with *dwara* is a further movement toward Vaishnavization.

today. They clearly sensed that it was Dadu and that his image was worthy of respect, yet at the same time seemed to sense that bowing or prostrating as they might have done before images or icons of Vaishnava deities would not be proper within the *nirgun* context of Dadupanthi ideology. Consequently, an inordinate number of devotees would start to walk in front of it, turn to face it, hesitate while perhaps shifting from one foot to another, offer a quick but tentative nod of the head and move on, perfectly reflecting the intellectual tension inherent in being a self-identified Vaishnava, but a *nirgun* Vaishnava.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

As a case study of the Dadu Panth, within what Daniel Gold (1994) has called "its Rajasthan context," this is the first English-language study of the sect since Orr published *A Sixteenth-Century Indian Mystic* in 1947. Orr's work itself was the first extensive written account of the panth, founded by followers of the low-caste poet-*sant* Dadu (1544-1604 CE) in and around the princely state of Amer/Jaipur in the early seventeenth century.

Although Dadu is usually included among the influential *sants* of the bhakti movement, and although the Dadu Panth is often referred to tangentially as an example of the *nirgun* bhakti tradition which also includes the Kabir Panth, Raidas Panth and the Sikh Panth, little substantive scholarship has been devoted to either Dadu or the Dadu Panth. Aside from Orr's rather archaic English translations of a handful of Dadu's compositions, and Monika Horstmann's (1991) German translations of some of Dadu's songs, he has remained inaccessible to Western readers. Until Winand Callewaert's (1988) translation of Jan Gopal's biography of Dadu, most Indian and Western writers merely parroted the earlier, nineteenth-century accounts of H. H. Wilson (1976) or that of Traill (in Hastings 1955), or accepted at face value contemporary sectarian versions of his life story. The Dadu Panth and its significant Naga branch have received even less attention from academics over the past century. Until Ratan Lal Mishra's (1997) study of Naga literature, including most significantly the *Bhaktamal* of Raghodas and the *Sundaroday* of Mangaldas, this particular branch of the sect was well known but little studied. The two important compositions of

Mangaldas used in this study, *Sundaroday* and *Bansadipika*, have never been published, are essentially unknown among scholars, and have until now never been translated into English. Even the *Bhaktamal* of Raghodas, although published in a critical edition, and better known than the works of Mangaldas, has never been translated into English.

Chapter One of this dissertation describes the *nirgun/sagun* dichotomy of the bhakti movement and examines the question of whether *nirgun* bhakti movements, devotionalist movements that rejected such tenets of organized Hindu religion as iconic worship as well as such social values as discrimination based upon caste, necessarily represented a form of social protest by oppressed segments of society. It shows that, in the case of the Dadu Panth, the ascetics who controlled the movement became dominated by twice-born castes, specifically Rajputs related to the ruling clan of Amer, the Kacchwahas. My findings thus challenge the paradigmatic model offered by Burghart (1978) and others that has portrayed *nirgun* bhakti movements as continuing the message of social protest attributed to their founders. Most such studies have been focused upon sects such as the Ramanandis and Kabir Panth, both centered in north-central India where the incorporation of large elements of the menial castes and downtrodden classes has continued to the present day. However, the development of the Dadu Panth followed a very different trajectory as a result of the differing sociopolitical conditions and cultural milieu of Jaipur State.

The Dadu Panth, existing during its formative period within a particular Rajasthani culture infused with an amalgam of Rajput and Persian value systems, and with a political leadership that was exalted within the hegemonic Mughal rule of North India, gradually incorporated a distinctive ethos in response to those factors. Far from expressing ideas of social protest, it came to express the apparently incompatible ideologies of *nirgun* bhakti and of Vaishnava orthodoxy filtered through the world-view of the dominant Rajput culture of

eastern Rajasthan.

Chapter Two, then, examines who were the Rajputs, particularly the Kacchwaha Rajputs, and what were those aspects of their caste ethos that were maintained by Naga ascetics of Rajput origin and incorporated into the ideology of the Dadupanthi Nagas. It shows that the elite position of the Kacchwaha dynasty within the Mughal system, and the concomitant flow of wealth and culture into Amer State, created a uniquely rich and sheltered environment in which the Dadu Panth developed. With wealthy patrons willing to support them, and a political atmosphere that allowed leeway for individual expression, the early community of Dadu's followers felt no pressures (such as were felt by the often-besieged Sikh community) compelling them to develop a strong central leadership, or even a well-defined community identity. In this way, sectarian practices were allowed to develop in a variety of seemingly incongruent manners. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Amer was a refuge for musicians, artists and scholars; it was also the location of much religious experimentation and reformulation. It is the place of origin of not just the Dadu Panth, but also of other communities of believers and panths or their branches. It was here at Galta that the Ramanandis established their first important center. It was here that the *rasik* Ramanandis composed their *madhurya* devotional literature on Ram and Sita. It was here too, in Revasa, that Anantadas composed his *parchais* and Nabhadas composed his *Bhaktamal*. It was in this same circumscribed territory that the first collections of *sant* literature, the *Panch Vanis* and *Sarvangis*, were produced by Dadupanthi sadhus, and that the compositions of Kabir and the legends of his life were first collected and written down. Remarkably, secular literature was concurrently experiencing a period of rapid growth in Jaipur State, as were art and music, influenced by the Persian culture of the Mughal court.

As various new religious communities began to coalesce into separate and distinct

panths, a process that took centuries in some cases, there was a good deal of give-and-take among them. Within each community there were factions vying for power, particularly as royal patronage increased with the expanding wealth of the state. In studying the processes of transformation undergone by the Dadu Panth from the relatively simple message of Dadu and the initial loosely-knit organization until today, I have had to examine multifarious influences upon Dadupanthi practice, since none of these communities existed in isolation. The ideology of the Dadu Panth reflects an awareness of and reciprocal interaction with other currents of religious and political thought that were swirling through Jaipur in its formative years. The influences upon their behavior and thought came from the Jains, the Nath yogis, the Ramanandis, the Chaitanyites, the Sikhs, the Shaivas, to some degree the Sufis, and possibly the Nizari Ismailis. The influences came from the teachings of Kabir, Raidas, Haridas and Namdev. They came, too, from the deeply influential, dominant Rajput culture of eastern Rajasthan. It is only through an examination of the specific social context that many of the activities of the Dadupanthis can be understood. By thus contextualizing the formulation of Dadupanthi identity, it is possible to make general observations regarding the processes of religious identity formation among other Hindu religious communities.

In tracing the process of organization, it has also become apparent that many of these communities coalesced into more bounded entities at more or less the same time, i.e., the early eighteenth century. Much of this can be explained by the edicts and demands set forth by Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II. It can also be observed that for some groups, such as the Sikhs and some of the Vaishnava devotionalist sects of Vrindavan, the process had begun even earlier, at the time of Muslim attacks upon temples and institutions during the reign of Emperor Aurangzeb (1658-1707 CE). Although the attacks were in fact sporadic and uneven, it was the threat they posed that caused communities of coreligionists to draw together into

more distinct and bounded communities. With no comparable threat in the relatively sheltered precincts of Jaipur, the Dadupanthis experienced no such urgency, a condition which may explain the diversity and lack of conformity among the various Dadupanthi lineages.

The first attempts at the construction of a distinctive identity through the demarcation of religious boundaries and the formalization of sectarian structures within the Dadu Panth is ascribed to the period of the leadership of Jaitram, who was instated as *mahant* of the principal center of Naraina in 1693 CE. Jaitram, whose tenure (1693-1732) coincided with the reign of Sawai Jai Singh II (1699-1743) as Maharaja of Jaipur, instituted a number of normative policies that brought the Dadu Panth more into line with orthodox Vaishnava religious communities. During the latter half of his reign, the Maharaja played a significant role in enforcing religious change within the Dadu Panth and other newly formulated bhakti communities by insisting upon adherence to more traditional practices. His conception of Rajput kingship, based upon well-established *shastric* principles, is explored in Chapter Three as a vital element in his own view of his role as an arbiter of sectarian behavior and identity. Asserting his primacy in all things political and religious, he called several important conferences of the communities of Vaishnava and neo-Vaishnava sadhus that resulted in significant reforms in their sectarian practices. For the Dadupanthis, this particularly meant the elimination of Muslims, Shudras and women from the ranks of their ascetic orders. That these changes occurred in response to the expectations of Sawai Jai Singh may be intimated from the fact that in states such as Marwar, beyond the control of the Maharaja of Jaipur, there continue to this day to be Dadupanthi *sadhvis* whereas they have not been accepted in Jaipur for centuries.

In Chapter Three, I have delineated the role of Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II in not only the reformation of Dadupanthis, Ramanandis and other Vaishnava sects in both Jaipur and

the region of Braj surrounding the sacred cities of Mathura and Vrindavan, but also in the establishment of *akharas* of armed Vaishnava sadhus who liberated Ayodhya from Shaiva occupation. His significant impact on these events had been previously considered only by Horstmann (Thiel-Horstmann 1985) in an unpublished paper to which scholars such as Van der veer (1997) and Pinch (1996a) have since referred regarding aspects of Naga history. Based upon her reading of the documents in the Kapad Dwara collection of the Jaipur City Palace detailing Sawai Jai Singh's edicts and correspondence, her paper was preliminary in the sense that she did not at that time have access to many of the specific details of Dadupanthi and Vaishnava Naga history. My study revises and in certain respects contradicts her analysis, particularly regarding the origins of Nagas who can only have been formally organized in 1734 CE, a date which corresponds with other data regarding the life of the ostensible founder, Balanand, and regarding Bakker's (1986) evidence that armed Vaishnava *akharas* did not appear in Ayodhya until the mid-1730s. This is a conclusion that has significant implications for, and makes a significant contribution to, the study of Jaipur's history as well as the history of the organization of armed Vaishnava Nagas as one aspect of eighteenth-century military and political history. Previously, scholars have generally presumed that the formal organization of armed Vaishnava *vairagis* had occurred earlier, in the early eighteenth century if not before. Additionally, there has been little if any commentary upon the fact that most, if not all, of the Vaishnava and neo-Vaishnava *akharas* originated in Rajasthan, with many of those originating in Jaipur.

During the period of social and political turmoil accompanying the weakening of Mughal hegemony and the rise of Maratha power in north India, a process that began during the reign of Sawai Jai Singh II, groups of ascetics of various orders began to arm themselves and go about in bands for protection. In Chapter Four, the origins of the militant groups of

Vaishnava and neo-Vaishnava sadhus is specifically traced to Jaipur during this period, and their increasing influence until the nineteenth century is explained in terms of the changing tactics of warfare and the shifting alliances that characterized the political climate during the second half of the eighteenth century in north India. Due to deteriorating economic and social conditions throughout north India during this period, joining a band of mercenary sadhus or joining a band of secular mercenaries were among the few avenues available to landless males to gain an economic foothold in the ongoing and rapidly changing processes of state formation. Drawing from secondary sources, I develop a comprehensive chronological portrait of one of the leading figures among the bands of mercenary Nagas, Himmat Bahadur. His career closely parallels the growth of regional successor states during the mid-eighteenth century, and the shifting alliances and increasing dependence on mercenaries that characterized the latter half of the century. Although the documentation from central India utilized by Pinch (1996a), Burghart (1978), and Lorenzen (1978) indicates that many of these mercenary sadhus, especially Ramanandi *vairagis*, were of varied caste origins, the documentation from Rajasthan indicates that most organized armies of armed Vaishnava Nagas (and here we can include the Dadupanthis) not only originated in eastern Rajasthan, but were established by Rajputs and, at least initially, contained a large representation of not only Rajputs, but specifically Kacchwaha Rajputs. Three of the military orders - Ramanandi, Nimbark, and Dadupanthi - were founded within Jaipur State with the knowledge and consent, if not the active engagement, of one or another of the Kacchwaha Maharajas of Jaipur. While there is evidence that the Ramanandi *vairagis* began to recruit from the oppressed castes once they relocated to Ayodhya, the Dadupanthi Nagas are shown to have continued their recruitment predominantly from among Rajputs and related martial castes.

The lineage of Dadupanthi ascetics, ostensibly founded by Sundardas and comprised

predominantly of local Kacchwaha Rajputs, organized themselves into armed *akharas* in 1755 CE. In Chapter Five, through the use of sectarian bardic accounts, the origins and history of this lineage are traced and their practices and world-view examined. By comparing the accounts of Raghodas in his *Bhaktamal* (c. 1660 CE) and those of Mangaldas in his *Sundaroday* and *Bansadipika* (c. 1860 CE), the shifting ideologies of the Nagas during that period of two hundred years are closely examined. I show that, during the period of relative peace and cultural production that characterized much of the seventeenth century in Amer, the Dadupanthi Nagas largely restricted their activities to the production, copying and dissemination of devotional literature, even though some of them at that period may have been already training in arms.

There are oblique references in Raghodas indicating that Shyamdas, the son of Maharaja Man Singh I of Amer who is considered the founder of the militant Shyam Sena, spent time with his disciples at the Ramanandi center of Galta where they would have had close interaction with like-minded Ramanandis. Later, they may have traveled with parties of armed Ramanandi *vairagis*. Nonetheless, the account in the previously unstudied *Bansadipika* of Mangaldas definitively claims that the Nagas were formally organized only in 1755 CE at Galta (again indicating an initial nexus with the armed Ramanandi *vairagis* who would also have been predominantly local Rajputs) by Kevalram and Hridairam, two disciples in the direct lineage of Shyamdas who were also responsible for a Naga schism with other Dadupanthis over their opposition to Mahant Jaitram's insistence that they shed outer symbols of their Rajput identities such as long hair, beards, and mustaches. They also would have been instrumental in the attempted Naga takeover of the Naraina *gaddi* after the death of Mahant Krishna Dev while he was in self-imposed exile in Merta in 1753 CE.

After their organization into militant bands, the Dadupanthi Nagas began to roam

about the countryside, being employed as mercenaries by various princely states. A turning point in their history was their valorous performance at the Battle of Khatu in 1780 CE under the military leadership of Mahant Mangaldas, in which they successfully defended what can only be termed a Rajput shrine. It was that performance which endeared them to the Maharaja of Jaipur, Sawai Pratap Singh (1778-1803 CE). For the next half century or more, they received unprecedented patronage from the court of Jaipur. In the process, their numbers grew dramatically, as did their wealth and their dominant position within the Dadu Panth. The repeated decimation of the countryside of Jaipur by drought, war, and raiding produced a landless population of Rajput youth already marginalized by repeated subdivision of the lands originally ceded to their forbears. Thus, there was a plentiful supply of recruits, poorly indoctrinated in the *nirgun* bhakti theology of Dadu, to fulfill the increasing demands for armed mercenary sadhus.

The analysis of the text of Mangaldas' *Bansadipika* and portions of his *Sundaroday* illustrates the manner in which the Rajput ethos cultivated by the Dadupanthi Nagas was steeped in concepts of Naga ties with the royal line of Amer, the Rajawat Kacchwahas. The comparison with the earlier composition of Raghodas presents a vivid rendering of the shifting emphasis in Rajput values over the intervening two centuries, while Mangaldas' frequent repetition of the Nagas' identification with their Rajput origins offers a concrete example of the persistence of a caste-based ethos among Hindu ascetics. Seeing themselves as descendants of Hari Singh, the sadhu Haridas who had been offered the title to the thirteenth *kotari* by his brother, Maharaja Man Singh I, they expressed a feeling of brotherhood and clan solidarity with the ensuing Maharajas of Jaipur, with the distinct exception of the ignominious Maharaja Sawai Ishwari Singh (1743-1750 CE). They thus saw their fortunes entwined not just with the spiritual lineage of Dadu, and with his disciple Sundardas and the

latter's Rathore forbears, but they also equally saw themselves as descended through Haridas and Shyamdas from the Kacchwaha rulers of Jaipur.

The three generations of rulers from Bharmal to Bhagavantdas to Man Singh come in for special mention by Mangaldas, for it is with them that the line of Kacchwaha rulers and that of Dadupanthi Nagas becomes intertwined. In a way, Bharmal and particularly Bhagavantdas are seen as not only progenitors of the great Maharajas of Amer and Jaipur, but also as progenitors of the Nagas. Interestingly, this has to do with their role in establishing ties with Akbar and the Mughals, for it was through their ties to the Mughals that the Kacchwahas flourished and became wealthy and influential; and it was through their ties with those rulers that the Dadupanthis, especially the Nagas themselves, flourished. Thus, other laudatory passages about the lineage begin with Bharmal and extend to Sawai Ram Singh II (1835-1880 CE).

Over the years, observers have commented on the apparent shift that had occurred in terms of religious practice at some undefined point in Dadupanthi history. The works of Raghodas and Mangaldas are further compared in Chapter Six in order to present a picture of the changing religious practices and values of the Naga lineage, and of other branches of the Dadu Panth, between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. In the seventeenth century, a period of peace and increasing wealth in Amer when the Nagas had been primarily occupied in literary activities, their devotional practices consisted of singing and chanting, meditation, and festive gatherings at which food would be shared. Certain practices -- melas, ritual food offerings, *arati* -- had already begun to develop in the community; but it was only later, as the social and political situation of Jaipur became more unsettled and they began to take up weapons in an organized manner, that the Nagas began to introduce new paradigms of religious practice. For many of these practices too, Kevalram and Hridairam are said to have

been the initiators.

The predominantly Rajput Nagas, poorly indoctrinated in the traditions of the Dadu Panth due to the rapid expansion of their numbers, adopted a number of practices acquired from their interactions with Sikh, Nimbark, and Ramanandi mercenaries with whom they associated in the military camps that were then introduced into general Dadupanthi practice to a greater or lesser degree. These included the institution of the veneration of Hanuman, and the elevation of *Dadu Vani*, the book of Dadu's collected utterances, to the position of an icon within the Dadu Dwara. Originally connoting a gathering hall for singing bhajans, the Dadu Dwara during this period became in essence a temple housing the icon of *Dadu Vani.* A previously unknown, early illustration of the worship of *Dadu Vani* in a temple-like structure on the dome of the *chhatri* of Dhanram in the village of Jasrapur confirms that the practice had already begun by approximately 1770 CE. The construction of the temple and worship of the book may also have involved the encouragement and participation of the *uttaradhis*, the wealthy and influential northern branch of the Dadu Panth which had had constant interaction with adherents of the Sikh Panth in the Punjab and Haryana. In addition to other innovations, the Nagas popularized the veneration of the *samadhis* of deceased *mahants* which were constructed using the traditional Rajput *chhatri* and the images of footprints common to the Jain tradition in Rajasthan. Again, the *chhatri* of Dhanram is one of the earliest extant examples. Although previous scholarship has discussed the accretion of these and other practices after the demise of Dadu, it has remained mute regarding the chronology of these events. Only through a careful reading of *Bansadipika* and observation of some of the few examples of Dadupanthi art and architecture remaining from the eighteenth century, has it been possible to attribute the institution of many of these practices to the Dadupanthi Nagas and to put together such a chronology for the first time.

Although in its initial stages the Dadu Panth was a localized community that had been open to adherents of all persuasions and was only loosely organized, the power gradually coalesced around the ritual center of Naraina, placing increasing authority in the occupants of the Naraina *gaddi* who, after Jaitram's tenure, were always selected from the Brahmin community. Responding to the the efforts at reformation of Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II, certain reforms were instituted under the direction of Mahant Jaitram which brought the Dadu Panth more into conformity with the classical Vaishnava ethos of the pan-Indian Sanskritic tradition. On the other hand, the distinctively regional Rajput ethos which characterized the Naga branch of Dadupanthi *sadhus* presented a challenge to the authority of the Naraina mahants. With the increasing wealth, patronage and power available to Nagas through armed mercenary activities in the latter half of the eighteenth century, they became numerically dominant and greatly affected the ideological and ritual character of the entire sect. This dissertation, by examining the specific nature of the Naga contribution and the sociopolitical conditions which impacted their own ethos as Rajputs, contributes not just to the understanding of Dadupanthi history, but also presents a specific case of ideological shift in response to social change that can illuminate the broader study of the development of Hindu religious sects.

Abbreviations

BD - *Bansadipika* of Mangaldas
BM - *Bhaktamal* of Raghodas
DJL - *Dadu Janam Lila* of Jan Gopal
DPP - *Dadu Panth Paricay* of Narayandas
DV - *Dadu Vani*

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